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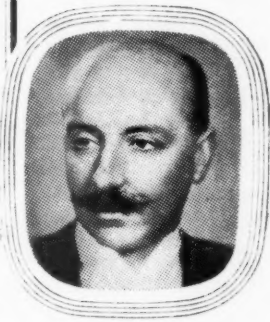
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THE MUSIC REVIEW

Edited by GEOFFREY SHARP

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Editorial

IN a previous issue (Volume III, No. 2, p. 79) we drew attention to a handful of recent outstanding products of American scholarship. Now, after a space of two-and-a-half years, and with the end of the war well in view, we have good reason to reconsider the achievement of scholars in that country during the war period.

There follows a list of twenty-seven works, all published (and mostly written) in the United States. In every case except one¹ the style of production, in which we include typography, make-up, paper, binding and general appearance, is first-rate: and in no case does the price exceed five dollars. The list is not and cannot be exhaustive, as it deals only with those volumes of which we have first-hand knowledge; but it is representative of the best critical and scholastic brains west of the Atlantic, of their most enterprising and imaginative publishing houses, and of the result which can be achieved in a country where scholarship is fostered rather than stultified and where there is the necessary determination to produce results and make them available, war or no war.

A few words about the books themselves.² Culver's *Musical Acoustics* forms a useful and up-to-date adjunct to Olson and Massa's standard textbook which is as essential to the progressive musician as are the works of Helmholtz and Lloyd.³

In the biographical section the Bruckner, Verdi and Wagner volumes are of the greatest importance. Of the purely technical works those of Piston and Hindemith (together with the new edition of Fux) will best repay close study. All the books in the historical, musicological and miscellaneous sections should find places in every library worthy of the name; and musicians who pride themselves on keeping abreast of modern thought will find in them at least a year's concentrated yet enthralling reading. How little we know of music who only England know.

To compare with this cross-section of recent American output we could mention a dozen books⁴ published in England during the same period which are not altogether unworthy of comparison in respect of the value of the matter presented. But as a group they emphasize very strongly the difference between the standards of British and American book production. British

¹ Stanley Chapple's *Language of Harmony*.

² The works of Haydon and Láng have already been mentioned in these pages, and the Apel, Einstein and Reese (together with the earlier Sachs volume) have been reviewed. Others will be noticed from time to time.

³ The truly "progressive" musician must understand at least the elements of that branch of science known as acoustics. It is not enough to know that the Royal Albert Hall commits the foulest outrage on music of any in the kingdom: whereas the knowledge why this is so may prevent us building another like it.

⁴ A list of author's names should be a sufficient reminder. *Viz.* Mosco Carner, Adam Carse, H. C. Colles, E. H. Fellowes, Karl Geiringer, Dyneley Hussey, Alfred Löwenberg, Robert M. Rayner, William Saunders, Donald Tovey (2 vols.) and Alex. Wood.

publishers have still to learn the art of making a profound thesis attractive to handle. There is no merit in being dull, either for publisher⁶ or author.

The war is drawing to its close; and there are in this country several important works awaiting publication. As they have already waited so long it would be a cheap triumph of enthusiasm at the expense of wisdom to rush them out on national wholemeal paper between flabby boards. Let us remember the plight of German book production immediately after the last war and see to it that our works of scholarship are given the production they deserve.

GEOFFREY SHARP.

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⁶ Production difficulties can be minimized even in these days.

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British enquiries for the Otterström volumes should be addressed to the Cambridge University Press: all other publications of American Universities are handled by the Oxford University Press. The English agents for W. W. Norton & Co. are J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd. With the exception of the Chapple and Hindemith volumes, the remainder can only be imported direct.

Review of Music

Arnold Van Wyk. *Three Improvisations on Dutch Folk Songs.* For Piano Duet. (Winthrop Rogers edition; Boosey & Hawkes.) 3s. 6d.

This lively little work will be generally welcomed. It is an original composition for piano duet; this classical species of Schubert and Brahms fame has recently been much neglected by both performers and composers outside the music hall. And yet it offers so many unexplored possibilities of pianoforte "orchestration" and technique. Van Wyk's improvisations are comparatively easy to play. They are written in a pleasant, slightly modernized tonal-harmonic idiom, and yet they are quite original in their way. They really grow out of the mood and rhythm of the Dutch song originals—this point is important, for only too often do we come across folk-song arrangements or fantasies the generally hyper-complex and gloomy style of which conflicts with the spirit of the folk-song melody.

The popular appeal of these pieces should secure for them a fairly wide support among the amateur public.

As a purely technical question: is the publisher's printing arrangement of the duets desirable? Earlier classical editions of piano duets have the "primo" part on the right and "secondo" on the left page of the music. Here both parts are printed on one page one on top of the other, as has been done in other recent publications. The advantages of such an arrangement are obvious in technically complicated or polyphonic pieces; but Van Wyk's work is rhythmically perfectly straightforward. I cannot see any reason why each of the players in turn is made to strain his eyes so much on every other page, in order to discover what is going on in the score.

E. H. M.

The Lesson of Mean-Tone Tuning

BY

LL. S. LLOYD

THOSE who consult the article on Temperament in the fourth edition of *Grove* find that this is "the name given to various methods of TUNING". They go on to read descriptions of tunings in equal temperament and mean-tone temperament, and find that the article then comes to a somewhat abrupt stop with the following editorial note:

"In former editions of this Dictionary the writer of the above here developed at length an argument for the partial restoration of meantone temperament. This argument was based largely on the researches of Bosanquet,¹ and included a description of the generalized keyboard [he] invented. . . . Fifty years of experience since the article was written, however, show that music has not taken the directions indicated."

Here we find the appropriate epitaph for the conscientious efforts made by nineteenth-century theorists to counter the supposed injuries which equal temperament was going to do to the art of music. The complicated keyboards of Peronnet Thompson, Colin Brown, and others, and the ingenious one designed by Bosanquet, referred to in the original article, become museum specimens. That is not to accept Ellis² view that the great composers from Palestrina to Wagner thought in tempered music. Lecky, who wrote the article in question, had a much clearer and more musicianly conception. His insistence that temperament is a "method of tuning" has increased significance when contrasted with the *a priori* assumption of other writers of the period, that the tuning of the ubiquitous piano necessarily identified the musical scale with equal temperament. To-day, when we have at our disposal exact scientific measurements which show that, as judged by the physical vibration in the air, the piano is never tuned in a theoretically accurate equal temperament, that its intonation shows frequent deviations from the theoretical ideal, that these deviations though normally small are not the same for different pianos and different tuners, that many of the fifths are true while many of the octaves are not, and that there is constant stretching of the octaves particularly in the extreme bass and treble, we naturally hesitate to accept the theorist's account of the damage done to the art of music by the system of tuning the piano. We are led to consider, instead, the problems of aural perception presented by the piano as heard by different musical ears, and the possible discrepancies between the vibrations in the air and the trained musician's perception of the

¹ For the tuning of his experimental organ Bosanquet used Nicholas Mercator's temperament, which divided the octave into 53 equal parts. But this division of the octave is of much earlier date than Mercator's day. Yasser states in his *Theory of Evolving Tonality*, p. 31, that a Chinese scholar, King-Fan (c. 200 B.C.) "constructed a system of 53 tones within the compass of an octave".

² Alexander Ellis, F.R.S., translated Helmholtz's *Tonempfindungen* into English as *Sensations of Tone*, but unfortunately added explanatory footnotes of his own.

response they excite in his ear. We brush aside all the pseudo-scientific speculation of the *a priori* theorist, and we begin afresh by first considering music as produced away from the keyboard and, in particular, the intonation of the string quartet and that of unaccompanied voices singing sixteenth-century music. We find that, from the beginning of the sixteenth to the end of the nineteenth century, the musical scale as judged in this way was always a flexible affair. Temperament, as a tuning, was an attempt to approximate as nearly as may be on an instrument of fixed intonation to the flexible intonation of strings or unaccompanied voices.

The original article in the first edition of *Grove* is a most musicianly piece of writing; but it exhibits one grave defect of the musical scholarship of the day. The writings of the nineteenth-century theorists are almost invariably found wanting when tested by the music of the sixteenth century, which was a closed book to most of them. Examples will readily occur to readers of the original article in *Grove*. Perhaps the fundamental error of these theorists was to assume, without qualification, that a note, once sounded, must maintain its intonation unaltered so long as it lasts. That assumption fails when tested by the music of Palestrina, a theme which I have developed at length elsewhere.³ Among modern writers, Stanford was insistent on the existence of mutable notes in the "pure scale" he distilled from sixteenth-century polyphony.⁴ This term means something more than the existence of two forms of the same note to be used as alternatives when the music so requires. The note *as heard* in the singing of a good choir must really be mutable. And this reminds us of Tovey's observation⁵ that on the piano we imagine a change of intonation in an enharmonic modulation, an observation which points to an intriguing problem in aural perception.⁶

Those who are interested in the flexible intonation of strings will find much food for thought in the article "Temperament" in Cobbett's *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music*, which discusses when and how the string player tempers his intervals. But earlier writers were equally clear about the intonation of strings and unaccompanied voices. Robert Smith, writing his *Harmonics* in the middle of the eighteenth century, quotes with approval a remark of Huygens (1629-95):

"Mr. Huygens observed long ago, that no voice or perfect instrument can always proceed by perfect intervals, without erring from the pitch at first assumed. But as this would offend the ear of the musician, he naturally avoids it by his memory of the pitch, and by tempering the intervals of the intermediate sounds, so as to return to it again."⁷

Every student of sixteenth-century music learns that Palestrina's technique was skilfully devised to enable singers to sing beautifully in tune without loss of

³ In "Just Intonation Misconceived", *Music & Letters*, July, 1943.

⁴ In his *Musical Composition*, pp. 15 and 16.

⁵ Recorded in the article "Harmony", *Enc. Brit.*, 14th ed.

⁶ This problem was more fully indicated, by the present writer, in the final essay in *The Musical Ear* (Oxford University Press).

⁷ Robert Smith's discerning comments were set out, by the present writer, in *Phil. Mag.*, Ser. 7, Vol. XXXIV, p. 476 (July, 1943). Dr. Robert Smith, F.R.S., was Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, and founder of the Smith's Prizes.

pitch. Fig. 1 provides a simple illustration. For convenience of reference I have barred this in $\frac{2}{2}$ time. The Mass is written in the Ionian mode transposed and, again for convenience of reference only, we may think of this phrase as in the key of F major. The intonation is governed by the ascending scale in the bass and tenor. In the second bar we meet the minor triad on the second degree of the scale, which requires a mutable note as we shall learn later. The result will here be found in the alto. The theorist may speculate on the way in which the singer will temper his intervals to sing in tune and maintain pitch, on whether the major third marked by a square bracket at *, which is an



FIG. 1.

"intermediate interval" not part of the prevailing harmony, would be given melodic intonation as a Pythagorean third. The contrapuntist would point to the way in which Palestrina approaches and quits the leap of a fourth as the significant factor in maintaining pitch. The experienced choirmaster whose choir has been trained to sing unaccompanied would be quite sure that they could sing this phrase perfectly in tune, without loss of pitch. The significance of Huygens' acute observation becomes clear. But Ellis, whose complacent belief in his own theories was made possible only by his ignorance of musical technique, brushed aside this observation on the ground that mere memory was not enough.⁸ Of course it is not enough. Memory is no sufficient protection against loss of pitch if the composer does not know his job. Composers who have trained themselves by the discipline of the contrapuntal technique of the sixteenth-century masters can write music, however modern, which is grateful to sing in tune. There is a most instructive piece of self-criticism, bearing on this very point, in Hauptmann's *Letters of a Leipzig Cantor* (Eng. trans. published by Novello). Finding that his choir lost true intonation in a passage in his *Salve Regina* he wrote:

"There is no justification for a composer who makes a pianoforte accompaniment indispensable for the performance of choral music; and the old masters were far from wrong, in adhering to a very peremptory code of laws, to regulate such compositions as this. I am more ashamed of such a passage than I should be of palpable octaves and fifths, which anyhow are no hindrance to pure intonation."⁹

The article in *Grove* thus launches us on a far-reaching inquiry, adequate discussion of which would carry us beyond the limits of an article in *THE MUSIC REVIEW*. But interesting light is thrown on some aspects of the matter if we return to where we began, with the editorial comment in the modern *Grove*, on the impossibility of a return to mean-tone tuning. For though it is idle to try to put the clock back, mean-tone tuning was a practical approximation to

⁸ *Sensations of Tone*, 1st ed., Translator's Appendix, p. 789.

⁹ The passage is quoted in full, with the musical example, in the final essay in *The Musical Ear*.

the scale system which can be distilled from the music of great masters from Taverner to Handel, and it has much to tell us about the essential problems of all tunings of keyboard instruments.

Let us begin, however, not with origins, but by considering mean-tone tuning as it was understood by knowledgeable musicians in this country little more than a century ago, when it was in practically universal use for the organ and the English piano. Indeed, it survived on the organ until well into the second half of the nineteenth century, and as an organ-tuning we naturally think of it to-day. It was used on Handel's organ. What then, exactly, was this mean-tone tuning? In the absence of an organ tuned in the mean-tone system on which to discover its good points and its limitations, perhaps the simplest answer is given by a picture¹⁰ showing the nature of this tuning graphically, as in Fig. 2.

In this figure the intervals produced by mean-tone tuning are drawn, with mathematical accuracy, on the left. On the right are shown, with a theoretical accuracy to correspond, all the *diatonic intervals* less than an octave, together with the octave itself, the major ninth, and the major tenth, each measured from "zero". We may conveniently think of diatonic intervals as being indicated, as nearly as may be, by the white keys of the keyboard; e.g. of the minor sixth as the interval measured upwards from E to C, of the tritone as that from F to B, of the imperfect fifth as that from B to F, and of the minor seventh as that from G to F, or D to C, all measured upwards. The sizes given to the fifth, the fourth, and the thirds and sixths, in Fig. 2, are those they would have in the appropriate concord of sixteenth-century counterpoint if sung perfectly in tune. What of the remaining diatonic intervals? Let us experiment. Take a slip of stiff note-paper, and lay it on the left-hand side of Fig. 2 with its edge touching the centre line. Make marks on it, with a sharp pencil, opposite the zero, the fourth, and the fifth, as accurately as possible. Now slide the paper slip up, till the zero mark is opposite the *major* (greater) tone. The mark for the fourth will be opposite the fifth. The major tone is now seen as the interval between C and the dominant of G.

Now slide the paper slip up, till the zero mark on it is opposite the major third. The fourth marked on it will be opposite the major sixth. (The musical tones corresponding to the zero, the major third, and the major sixth, on the right-hand side of the figure will produce a 6/3 concord.) Now slide the paper slip down till the fifth marked on it is opposite the major sixth. The zero mark is now opposite the *minor* (lesser) tone. The minor tone is here seen as the difference between a major sixth and a fifth. It is also the interval we must add to a major tone to build up a major third (try it with the paper slip and see). That is why the musical scale has two kinds of whole tone for true concords produced on instruments of free intonation, such as stringed instruments. Moreover, these two kinds of whole tone are sometimes inter-changed, e.g. to produce a perfect fifth between the second- and sixth-degree notes of the

¹⁰ The writer is indebted to the Oxford University Press for permitting the use of this figure and Fig. 7, which are adapted from his *Musical Slide-Rule*, and the reproduction of an illustration from his *Music and Sound* which appears as Fig. 4.

scale, as we have just seen. We have now obtained all the information we need to understand mean-tone tuning.

Obviously the organ-builder cannot provide notes which move about, to do duty at one time in a major tone, at another in a minor tone. Thus, the first thing the organ-tuner has to do is to discover a workable compromise.

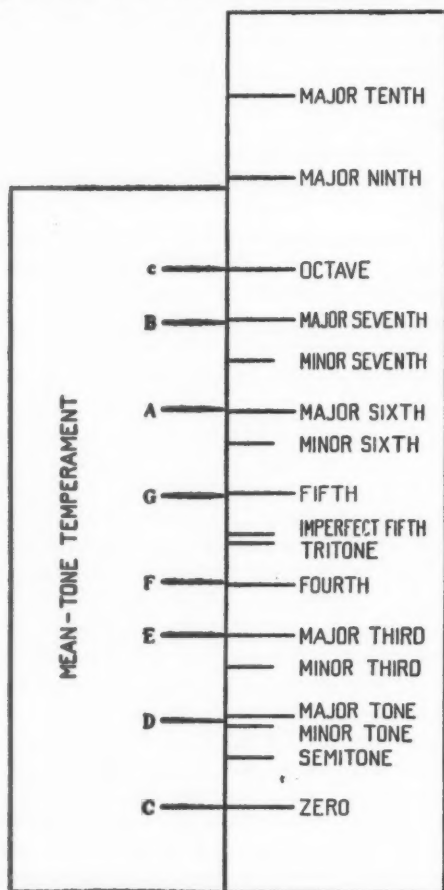


FIG. 2.

Mean-tone tuning adopted the simple plan of splitting the difference between the major tone and the minor tone: whence its name. It follows, as Fig. 2 shows, that the major third, which is the sum of a major and a minor tone, is tuned perfectly true in mean-tone temperament. How shall we tune the fifth?

Turn back a couple of paragraphs. The interval by which a major sixth exceeds a *minor* tone is a fifth. Consequently that by which a major sixth exceeds a *major* tone is less than a fifth. It is too small by the difference

between a major and a minor tone, a small theoretical interval called a comma. In the scale of C, we may conveniently think of the major tone as giving us D, and of the major sixth as giving us A, each being measured from C; but between D and A we should have an interval which is a flattened fifth. To make a true fifth with D as the dominant of G we should have to sharpen the A by a comma. In turn we should have to sharpen the E above it by a comma; for the interval by which a major tenth exceeds a major sixth is a perfect fifth. (Try it on Fig. 2 with the fifth which you marked on your paper slip.)

We began, four paragraphs back, by finding D as the dominant of G, which in turn is the dominant of C. Thus, beginning with C, we have in effect now tuned four successive fifths perfectly in tune: CG, GD, DA, and AE; and we have reached an E that is a comma sharp. But in mean-tone tuning we make all major thirds true. The solution of the tuner's problem is obvious: split the superfluous comma among the four fifths, and flatten each one by $\frac{1}{4}$ comma. G will be $\frac{1}{4}$ comma flat, D will be $\frac{1}{4}$ comma flat. But A will not be $\frac{3}{4}$ comma flat. A true DA is a comma less than a true fifth. Therefore A, as now tuned, will come out $\frac{1}{4}$ comma sharp. In turn this will give an E that is perfectly true, two octaves and a major third above the C we began with.

Since a mean-tone fifth is $\frac{1}{4}$ comma flat, a mean-tone fourth, required to complete the octave, is $\frac{1}{4}$ comma sharp. This fixes F for us, a mean-tone fourth above C. It remains to fix the tuning for B, as the major third of the mean-tone dominant, G, in a *full close*. Obviously, since G is $\frac{1}{4}$ comma flat and all major thirds are true in mean-tone tuning, B will also be $\frac{1}{4}$ comma flat. The mean-tone semitone Bc, like that between E and F, is $\frac{1}{4}$ comma larger than the true diatonic semitone. We have now tuned all the white keys, for the scale of C, in mean-tone temperament. Examine the result on the left-hand side of Fig. 2, in which the width of all the black graduation marks was made, as nearly as possible, that representing $\frac{1}{4}$ comma. In practice, the tuning was accomplished by tuning the notes of an octave, or so, by successive fifths tuned upwards as mean-tone fifths, a mean-tone fourth, tuned downwards, being interpolated, as required, to restrict the compass of the notes used, as Lecky explained in the original article in *Grove*. The right degree of tempering was determined by the rate of beating; and, for reasons explained in books on musical acoustics, a fourth tuned downwards from a given note in any temperament produces beats at the same rate as a fifth tuned upwards from the same note in the same temperament.¹¹ The tuner checked his results by trial with the "sweet" major thirds. This procedure made use of the black keys of the keyboard, to which we now turn. The left-hand side of Fig. 7, below, shows the tuning of those keys.

For a limited range of key we tune our five black keys to give the same intervals as the white ones. We so tune F \sharp , C \sharp , and G \sharp , in the manner explained above, that severally they produce true major thirds with the mean-tone dominants of the keys of G, D, and A respectively. We have two black

¹¹ This was verified experimentally, and deduced from his theory of beats, by Dr. Robert Smith, F.R.S., as set out in his *Harmonics* (2nd ed. 1758) in a passage, p. 93, under the heading "To show that the theory of beats agrees with experiments": see a paper by the present writer in *Phil. Mag.*, XXXIV (7), p. 472 (July, 1943).

keys left. One we will tune as a mean-tone fifth below F (or a mean-tone fourth above it, which is the same thing), giving us B \flat , the subdominant of F, a mean-tone semitone above A. The other we will tune as a mean-tone fifth below B \flat , giving us E \flat , the subdominant of B \flat , a mean-tone semitone above D. For if we add a mean-tone semitone to a mean-tone fifth the quarter commas of the tempered intervals cancel each other, and we obtain a true minor sixth. As this is the complement of a true major third, required to make up an octave, mean-tone temperament produces minor sixths, such as AF or DB \flat , that are true. All our black keys are now used up, but we have no D \flat , D \sharp , G \flat , A \flat , or A \sharp . If we try to use C \sharp , E \flat , F \sharp , G \sharp , or B \flat instead, we shall produce what our grandfathers called a "wolf" (because of its howling). Why is this?

On the right-hand side of Fig. 2 we have two diatonic intervals nearly the same: the tritone and the imperfect fifth. If the zero is C these intervals become CF \sharp , the tritone of the key of G, and CG \flat , the imperfect fifth of the key of D \flat , as shown in musical notation in Fig. 3. If we assume these discords



FIG. 3.

to be tuned perfectly true (say by reference to the respective dominants)¹³ they fix F \sharp and G \flat for a theoretically exact tuning with true intonation.

In Fig. 4 the relevant intervals, from the fourth to the fifth as shown in Fig. 2, are redrawn on a much larger scale; and to redraw them use has been made of the fact that there are almost exactly $9\frac{1}{2}$ commas in a major tone, and $5\cdot2$ commas in a diatonic semitone (a comma being, as noted above, the difference between a major and minor tone). The intervals FG \flat and F \sharp G, being diatonic semitones, are each $5\cdot2$ commas and therefore the interval

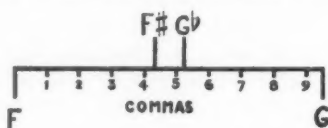


FIG. 4.

F \sharp G \flat , by which they overlap, is $0\cdot9$ commas (these arithmetical niceties assume a theoretically exact tuning). Now let us go back to mean-tone tuning, and let us suppose that our keyboard has additional black keys for the five "black notes" which we found, in the previous paragraph, to be lacking in mean-tone tuning. A mean tone is $\frac{1}{2}$ comma less than a major tone, *i.e.* it is equivalent to only 9 commas. On the other hand, a mean-tone semitone, being $\frac{1}{4}$ comma larger than a diatonic semitone, is equivalent to $5\cdot45$ commas. On both accounts F \sharp is flattened and G \flat would be sharpened in mean-tone tuning. The result is that, in mean-tone tuning, the intervals FG \flat and F \sharp G overlap much more than they would if tuned with true intonation (Fig. 4); and F \sharp and

¹³ To tune down a major tone from the dominant we should tune down a perfect fifth and then up a perfect fourth.

G \flat are now 1.9 commas apart—which is more than twice the corresponding difference with true intonation, or more than one-third of a diatonic semitone, or nearly 8 times the error in the mean-tone fifth. This result is exhibited in Fig. 5. Even the most tolerant ear boggles at the beating (the wolf's howling) produced by using a mean-tone F \sharp for G \flat .

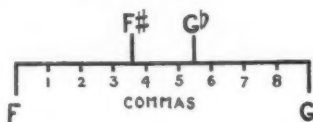


FIG. 5.

Since all whole tones are the same size in mean-tone tuning, the mean-tone interval between each pair of adjacent sharps and flats will be the same size as that shown in Fig. 5, for F \sharp G \flat in mean-tone tuning. It is interesting to discover that this interval is the same as the interval G \sharp A \flat if both notes are tuned in true intonation with C. For since the interval between a true A \flat and C is a true major third, this interval will be exactly the same in mean-tone tuning, which makes all major thirds true. Similarly the interval between C and a true G \sharp , which is the sum of two true major thirds, will be exactly the same in mean-tone tuning. This is illustrated by Fig. 6, which gives the positions of G, G \sharp , A \flat , and A, which are required for theoretically true intonation with the tonic, C. The interval G \sharp A \flat is the same as the interval F \sharp G \flat in Fig. 5, but the interval GA is $\frac{1}{2}$ comma less than the mean tone in Fig. 5, because it is a minor tone, as we saw earlier in this article.

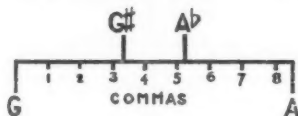


FIG. 6.

It is evident that in mean-tone tuning we must be content with only five chromatically altered notes, and the available good keys are limited to the major keys of C, G, D, A, F, and B \flat , and the minor keys of G, D, and A. It was perhaps the limited number of good minor keys, in particular, that prompted the builders of some organs to provide two more pipes to the octave for each organ-stop, so as to give them D \sharp as well as E \flat , and A \flat as well as G \sharp . Each of the two corresponding black digitals was divided, transversely, so as to do duty for two digitals—one-half playing the flat and the other the sharp¹³ (see Fig. 7 below). This added E minor and C minor to the available minor

¹³ This device was adopted as early as the sixteenth century, for Salinas records that he found it on an organ in Florence (*vide Grove's Dictionary of Music*, 1st ed. Vol. IV, p. 73). It was used by Father Smith for the organ he built, in 1684, for the Temple Church. It was referred to by Pier. Francesco Tosi, in his *Observations on the Florid Song*, written in Italian and published in Bologna in 1723 (English trans. 1743). It was dismissed by Dr. Robert Smith in his *Harmonics* (2nd ed. 1758) with the comment that "the old expedient . . . by inserting more keys in every octave, is quite laid aside by reason of the difficulty in playing upon them". Yet the vogue of mean-tone tuning for organs lasted, without it, for another century.

keys, and E major and E \flat major to the available major ones. For sustained notes, such as those of hymn-tunes, the device would not be too inconvenient.

To sum up: the fifths and fourths were more mistuned than in equal temperament but, as experience showed, not to an extent which offended the organist's ear. The major thirds were true, and the minor ones had less than half the error of the equally tempered minor third. Yet despite the harmonious effect of this tuning, its limitations of key and its inability to provide for much

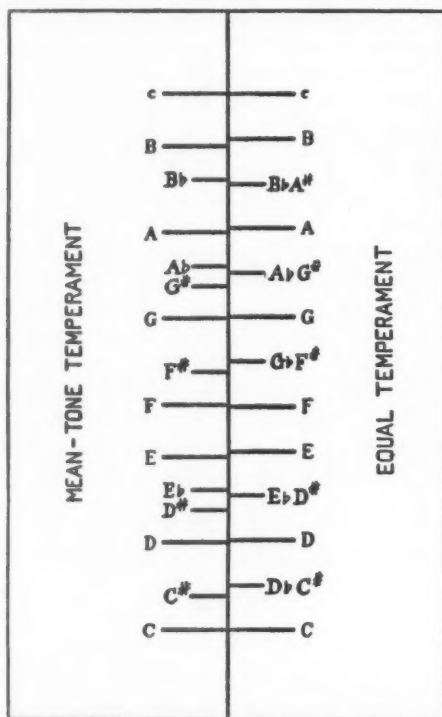


FIG. 7.

chromatic harmony led to its abandonment with changing taste in Church music. The differences between the two temperaments are shown graphically in Fig. 7.

If, however, we travel back to an earlier period we discover why it was that, for a keyboard instrument with fixed intonation, such as the organ, mean-tone temperament was the best possible approximation to the flexible intonation of the polyphonic period. As an example, consider the opening strain of Taverner's *Western Wynde* Mass, written before mean-tone tuning was standardized by Salinas. This is shown in Fig. 8.¹⁴ In an article entitled "The Musical Scale"

¹⁴ The writer is indebted to the Carnegie United Kingdom Trust and the Oxford University Press for permission to transcribe this example from Vol. I of *Tudor Church Music* (he has inserted modern barring).

in the issue of *The Musical Quarterly* for April, 1942, the present writer analysed the various concords in the passage and showed that, *as heard* by a musical ear, not less than four of the notes written in it must be mutable, viz.:— G, C, E, and A, if the concords are all to sound perfectly in tune. The scale-system of modal polyphony was surprisingly flexible, and it is quite evident that, in this example, the degree of flexibility is connected with the absence of the tonality of a later period, for to the modern ear the music sounds at first as if it alternated between the keys of G minor and F major and occasionally touched B \flat major and D minor.



FIG. 8.

It is easy to see from this example why the device of a mean tone on a keyboard instrument, adopted to serve as either a major or a minor tone, commended mean-tone tuning in the sixteenth century as the best way of coping with these mutable notes and of approximating to the flexible scale-system as well as was possible on an instrument of fixed intonation. And this example also explains why C \sharp , E \flat , F \sharp , G \sharp , and B \flat were chosen for the "black" keys of the keyboard. Taverner's Mass was written in the Dorian mode transposed, and it makes use of B \flat , E \flat , and F \sharp , as well as B \natural , E \natural , and F \natural . An authentic cadence on D, in the Dorian mode proper, required C \sharp , while a similar cadence on A, in the Aeolian mode, required G \sharp . As R. O. Morris points out in his *Contrapuntal Technique in the Sixteenth Century*, p. 11, "these five chromatic notes B \flat , E \flat , F \sharp , C \sharp , G \sharp are the only chromatic notes permitted in the strict modal system of the sixteenth century", and they are precisely those given by mean-tone temperament.

The noteworthy thing about mean-tone tuning is that, taking its origin in modal polyphony, before the sense of classical tonality had been developed by composers, it should, nevertheless, have served, at least for tuning the organ, whose intonation is more insistent to the ear than that of the piano, for some three hundred years; for a long time, that is, after classical tonality had attained its dominating influence on later music. This historical fact is of considerable significance in estimating the influence, if any, which temperaments may have exercised on the composer's mode of thought. Unless we

take account of mean-tone temperament as well as equal temperament we are failing to take account of all the relevant evidence. That of itself is a sound reason for trying to understand this now forgotten tuning, not, in textbook fashion, as a technical problem for the tuner, but as it appealed to the musical ear, which is what we have been attempting to do.

When we take both temperaments into account it is evident that we must think, separately, of two different aspects of the matter. The first is the employment of a rigid intonation, as measured by physical vibrations, inseparable from any keyboard music *as played* (not necessarily the same thing as *heard*). The second is the distortion of what should be consonant intervals, and in particular those of the concords of sixteenth-century polyphony, which is characteristic of one or other temperament. For it is in this second characteristic that the two temperaments differ.

Consider, first, the rigid intonation which, for 400 years, the keyboard has tried to impose on our ears, and on the musical scale used by composers. Here the acid test is the intonation of the string quartet, and that of a good cathedral choir trained to sing unaccompanied. Even Ellis, who had a very accurate ear, recorded that the flexible intonation of strings and voices was an established fact. Three-quarters of a century ago he wrote¹⁵:

"The want of fixed tones both on the bowed instruments and the human voice, and the extreme ease with which pitch can be almost involuntarily and unconsciously altered to suit the feeling or circumstances of the moment, while forming of course the great point of perfection which distinguishes these musical instruments from all others, yet occasion great difficulties in the way of scientific investigation. It is impossible to depend with certainty on hearing the same intonation twice."

But surely, if the flexible intonation of a good string quartet, or a good unaccompanied choir was really their great point of musical perfection, this observation is conclusive. It demolishes at a stroke Ellis' *a priori* theory that composers whose writing for strings and voices discloses, in fact, the use of mutable notes, for true concords, thought in tempered music. His "great difficulties" arose, not from scientific investigation, but from his attempt to confine the practice of artists, and the procedure of composers, to the conclusions he reached from the rigid intonation of his experimental harmonium, conclusions which he embodied in the duodenarium he devised to guide composers in restricting their freedom of modulation in the way he thought desirable. We are reminded that Hauptmann's criticism of the piano as an instrument to accompany his violin was not of its faulty intonation but of its rigid intonation. As an illustration he took the string player's practice of playing F#, as a decorating note, above Gb (cf. Fig. 4), or C# above Db.

Here is the most important lesson of mean-tone tuning, and it is significant also for equal temperament. Until we use the piano to accompany strings, the rigid intonation of the instrument *as played* matters less, and must always have mattered less, than the *a priori* theorist supposed. To understand why, we must turn to the properties of ear and the brain, and consider the intonation of the piano *as heard*, particularly by those who think contrapuntally. For the

¹⁵ *Sensations of Tone*, 1st ed., p. 483.

a priori theorist assumed that the intonation we hear corresponded, exactly, to the vibrations we listen to, whereas the intonation we hear "is correlated directly only with the neural activities occurring in that portion of the brain which is known as the cerebral cortex".¹⁸

Like mean-tone tuning, equal temperament adopts a compromise whole tone, which, as Fig. 7 suggests, is about a third of a comma larger than a mean tone. The characteristic which really distinguishes equal temperament from mean-tone temperament is the sharp major third and the "narrow" minor third, with corresponding modification in the sixths. This is particularly evident on the organ when played loudly, with the more penetrating reeds and the mutation stops and mixtures. These strengthen the higher partial tones of the diapason and give increased definition to its notes and to the intervals between them. Even then the harshness of the thirds may be mitigated by one of the most important stops of the instrument, the acoustic quality of the building. The extreme case is the harmonium on which equal temperament is almost intolerable. There was much to be said for the efforts of the nineteenth-century theorists to provide it with so many notes to the octave that its cost would be prohibitive, and to equip it with a complicated keyboard which would make it unplayable.

At this point our growing knowledge of the science of hearing again takes a hand. There is great variation in the acuity of hearing of different pairs of ears. That acuity may be strengthened by careful training, or damaged by inattention and carelessness. Lionel Tertis makes a valuable contribution to musical acoustics in his *Beauty of Tone in String Playing* (1938):

"Perfect intonation is the rock foundation of the string player's equipment. Without this no one should be allowed to perform in public. . . . The certain road to never-failing perfect intonation is listening of the most *concentrated* kind. There is a vast difference between listening and listening *intently*. It is the latter that is imperative."

No doubt some composers have been influenced by the actual intonation of the piano, particularly in dealing with chromatic passages or in using a chromatic idiom. In so far as this is true the evidence must be found in their music, for example, in certain passages which it is difficult to sing or play in tune: mere conjecture is not good enough. For to sing or play with any accuracy in equal temperament is, acoustically, a far more difficult thing than the theorist imagines. To a sensitive ear, listening intently, a consonance is sharply defined while a dissonance, which includes a tempered, *i.e.* a mistuned, consonance, lacks definition. The ear, so to speak, can only make a shot at equal temperament. For many pianists the sharp major third of their instrument may possibly induce a vague kind of listening which helps the ear to accept the mistuned intervals as good enough and the rigid intonation as a musical scale. On the other hand, there are well authenticated instances of organists who have come to prefer the faulty thirds of their instrument and criticize their choirs for singing thirds, unaccompanied, which sound flat to them. But how many pianists have so far absorbed the tuning of their instrument that they criticize the intonation of a good string quartet? On the contrary, most pianists find it particularly beautiful.

¹⁸ THE MUSIC REVIEW, Vol. III, No. 2, p. 100.

It is beyond question that *a priori* theory plays too large a part in the notion that composers think, indeed *can* think in any exact sense, in equal temperament. With all its logical implications this *a priori* theory proves too much. If a composer is obliged to think in terms of the intonation of his instruments, we must suppose that Bach had to think in the "pure scale" of polyphony, with its flexible intonation, when writing for his choir, in mean-tone tuning when writing for his organ, and in something like equal temperament when writing for his clavichord. A theory which proves too much stands self-condemned. Is it not simpler, and more reasonable, to imagine Bach thinking, like any serious student of counterpoint to-day, in terms of musical intervals? Enharmonic modulation is the particular trouble of the *a priori* theorist who assumes (for it is pure assumption on his part) that it implies equal temperament, which identifies F# with Gb, and so on. Tovey is insistent⁵ that enharmonic modulation implies true intonation and a flexible scale (he writes of the "unstable" intonation of mutable notes); for otherwise it must lose its musical significance as a "sublime mystery". To assign it to equal temperament is surely to put the cart before the horse. Equal temperament is the best approximation, on an instrument of fixed intonation, to the flexible intonation implied in enharmonic change. Those writers who find in equal temperament an explanation of the procedures of modern music must undertake the forbidding task of convincing us that musical ears, to-day, have lost qualities they certainly possessed for many centuries—qualities which made them conscious of enharmony.

We must be careful to except those composers whose protagonists claim that their atonal music is breaking new ground by the use of a scale which implies a closer approximation than the piano-tuner can achieve, in practice, to the division of the octave into twelve exactly equal intervals. That is a deliberately *conscious* effort and it demands a new technique. Indeed, were the deliberate use of this intonation the whole story, one would be inclined on scientific grounds to postulate a technique which, on all possible occasions, contradicted that of the sixteenth century, as being an experimental attempt to defeat the natural properties of the ear. What we are concerned with, however, is the *unconscious* effect, if any, of equal temperament on the procedures of other musical composition, particularly that of composers who have abandoned the nineteenth-century academic practice of giving harmony pride of place over polyphonic writing and the study of counterpoint, and who have not sought to banish pure consonance from their vocabulary. There is some ground for thinking that temperament has long ago done its worst and that, in the main, musical composition has shied away from its rigid intonation.

The Editor of *Grove*, in the note from which we quoted at the outset, expressed the view that since Lecky wrote his article, "composers . . . have increasingly tended to think in terms of Equal Temperament, witness the whole-tone scale and other developments of Harmony". With great respect for his musical scholarship, we may doubt whether this does not show too much deference to the "theorist". The reference to the whole-tone scale is significant. In "theory" this scale presupposes the use of every alternate note in an

octave of twelve semitones of equal temperament. But "theory" and practice are very different things; and, unless it is the fruit of musical scholarship, musical theory is usually most unscientific in its method and outlook. Tovey expressed the opinion that the whole-tone scale had far less to do with Debussy's music than is commonly supposed.¹⁷ Here again the acid test is the intonation of the string quartet. The slow movement of Debussy's quartet has some beautiful phrases which owe their charm precisely to the fact that they are played perfectly in tune. Take, as a typical example, the phrase (Fig. 9) quoted



FIG. 9.

by Edwin Evans in his article on Debussy in Cobbett's *Cyclopedic Survey of Chamber Music* with the comment: "It would surely need no more than this one bar to identify the composer!"¹⁸ Now look at it acoustically, which means in terms of the natural properties of the ear. Observe the perfect fifths which build into the harmonic structure, and recall that the fifth has very sharp definition and insists on true intonation. Look at the diatonic intervals of the first violin and viola, and at the scale in the 'cello part, ending by moving from a minor sixth to a major sixth below G \flat . Even the sequence of falling semitones in the second violin part is a melodic device as old as the hills, though the player is here helped over two difficult stiles by perfect fifths with the first violin. Only in their last notes do the middle parts meet a surprise; and the 'cello, aided by the first violin, determines their notes by a pure concord. Granted a string quartet that observes Tertis' direction to listen *intently*, it would be hard to find a passage which, despite its elusive tonality, would appear to be more difficult to play in equal temperament instead of perfectly in tune. It remains true to-day that, as Clerk Maxwell said¹⁹ nearly three-quarters of a century ago,

"The special educational value of this combined study of music and acoustics is that more than almost any other study it involves a continual appeal to what we must observe for ourselves",

for this is the touchstone of the scientific method, which insists on bringing all conjecture, such as that of the musical "theorist", to the test of experimental investigation and accurate observation.

¹⁷ Brief quotation is impossible. Readers will find the witty original in the article "Harmony", *Enc. Brit.*, 14th ed.

¹⁸ The phrase is here transcribed by kind permission of the Oxford University Press.

¹⁹ In the Rede Lecture at Cambridge, 1878.

The Functions of the Critic

BY

JOHN BOULTON

WHAT should be the functions in contemporary musical life, of the professional music critic, by which is meant the columnist who is regularly employed by daily and weekly newspapers, literary journals and magazines? Study of musical journalism over a period of recent years forces the posing of this question. The employment of music critics is a regular feature of the Press at large, and if we are to conclude that the art of music can be usefully influenced by their work we must formulate an answer. It will then be necessary to attempt an equation of their functions with the present-day condition of Press criticism. It is the purpose of this essay to do that in general terms.

Music begins as an inspiration and a task on the part of the composer and finishes in the ears and nerves of an audience—or of audiences. Between those ends a number of diverse forces operate and upon their direction and resolution depends the kind of music we hear and, with respect to contemporary music, hand on to posterity. The ultimate object of the critic, at any level, is to influence composers, audiences and the lines of communication between them in such a way as to induce enhanced vitality and quality in the art of music. Criticism should function in the evaluation and interpretation of all of three phases, composition, communication and reception.

Study of the musical journalism of the last ten years suggests that good purpose might be served in the first place by an enumeration of some journalistic activities which do not, in themselves, constitute any proper function of music criticism. These are:—

The writing of undocumented essays on aspects of the history of music, the appeal of which is based upon some topical and transient news interest. The prejudiced decrying at length of long dead composers whose work the critic does not like despite the decisions of posterity. The gratuitous lauding at length of long dead composers whose work the critic admires, as do audiences at large (an extremely easy way of earning lineage). Indulging in polemics with other critics whose findings with respect to such elements as Philosophic Content and Psychological Revelation in great music do not correspond with their own to a point which projects discussion into fields covering philosophy and psychology but not music.

So many critics, including some eminent ones, have spent so much time, space and thought on these matters of late that two important aspects of criticism—that of musical composition and of performances—have received less and less attention.

Criticism of new compositions is the most obvious single aspect of the critic's work. At a time when native composers are producing, and producing prolifically, music of greater stature than any these islands have known for over three

hundred years and getting a considerable fraction of it performed and reproduced, the scope of the critic has widened sharply and his work has been brought to his doorstep. It is instructive to study together the notices given, by a handful of eminent critics, to a few major works all played for the first time during the present decade. One gets the feeling that the body of critics have marked time for so long, have for so long filled their columns with excursions into the generalities of the art, that they are not sure how they ought to approach the phenomenon of new composition. A few, probably a minority, are patently ill-equipped for an attempt. What do we expect from the others? One clearly cannot expect that the critical norm should be a definite statement as to the quality of any individual work. (*We frequently get such statements.*) This is to say that we must not blame the critics because they do not always pronounce that this is good and that is bad. Their essential work is to evoke something of enthusiasm and of tolerance and a background for comparative judgment on their readers' part. Those critics equipped to give useful considered judgments and evaluations with any degree of supposed precision, know that to essay such on single or rare and widely spaced performances is wrong. The good critic sows the seeds of interest in his reader's mind with such directive suggestion as he feels competent to administer, and leaves it at that. Far too many, however, feel for some reason obliged to pronounce a judgment on the one hand or, on the other, to write inadequately in terms of what a given work might have been like had the composer done this or that—or even had someone else written it.

The criticism of established work is really only useful if it aims at a re-evaluation. Some composers, Berlioz, Wagner, Brahms and Delius are examples, have provided happy communal rumination grounds for so many loose-ended critics for so long that this aspect is, these days, somewhat disreputable. That is unfortunate. For it would be strange if, in the historical hurly-burly of four hundred years, when material changes have happened at an ever-increasing rate in increasingly complex relation to each other, the art of music, in spite of its abstract nature, had all its values neatly aligned. It is in the nature of things that there must be new evaluations. And if the present world conflict leads us, as it should, to times more conscious of man's heritage of real creation, the need and scope for new judgments will increase. The critic will have to face the tasks of helping to direct and of interpreting new views. For both of these he must be in contact with those institutions which are in many diverse ways responsible for the making of music, and those who go to hear it. To debate with his fellow critics is something—but not enough.

If contemporary musical journalism has grasped its opportunities in the field of musical composition with a sometimes infirm hand, it has avoided touching, almost completely, the next phase. Between the composition and the audience stand executive artists, orchestras, schools of music, concert organizations, the B.B.C., the gramophone companies, the publishers—to mention only those institutions in the direct line of music-communication. These hold all that matters materially to musical life—given the existence of worth-while composers. Criticism is related to them, like freedom of

expression and the exercise of that freedom are related to a democracy; if it is absent they become moribund.

To deal first with executants—individual artists whom we cannot properly treat as “an institution” but who, for our present purpose must receive consideration collectively *vis-à-vis* the critics:—The critic’s approach to performers is a much more simple matter than is the case with composers. Here he can talk more boldly of good and bad than is usually permissible or possible with creative artists. In England the body of executive artists has, in modern times, set up such standards that the measure of performances can be quickly gauged with fair accuracy by any critic with a certain minimum of technical appreciation and aesthetic sensibility. A large number of writers, so equipped, have maintained a fair standard of discrimination and of restrained writing in this respect. The sum total of Press criticism, has, however, been responsible for two major injustices. In the first place not enough attention has been paid to young artists. For this reason the majority of English instrumentalists and singers of widely accepted merit are middle-aged or older. We know from age-long international experience that precocity in performers is important. Great artists, as a general rule, show more than mere signs of greatness at the first stages in their career. Too many native artists are only allowed to appear as artists of international stature when they are old. It is far better that the critics should make, as make they must, a few courageous mistakes, than that, amongst our artists—including some of the finest in the world—there should be so many who have so short a time to live and exercise that influence which accepted greatness gives to them. Secondly, there has been notorious tenderness shown to certain established artists throughout their recent careers. This is mostly true of instrumentalists and singers of the globe-trotting-every-appearance-a-benefit-concert type who have been a scourge in that they have helped more than anything else to keep the tastes of audiences at minimum levels. For all their accepted artistry they have played rubbish and they have sung rubbish until, with some, their actual performance has become soulless and superficial. Here, the nature of Press notices becomes comprehensible when one realizes that a number of great names have been allowed to acquire news value as names—as personalities—and what has appeared in the Press has been shaped into news-entertainment rather than criticism. One can search the pre-war files in vain over many years for critical comments of any weight on the performances of one particularly famous violinist and one celebrated tenor in this class. Yet the body of musicians regard the work of these people with irritation and something of contempt. So perhaps do some critics. They should say so, for that is their job.

The influence exercised by wireless and recorded music is not calculable; it is clearly very great. In the case of the first of these there is wide agreement amongst the musically educated that criticism of the B.B.C., both with regard to its policies and to the performances it sponsors is called for most strongly. Here we have a tremendously powerful institution which, were it free to disregard responsible criticism could establish its own standards, qualitatively and quantitatively and could force musical tastes and opinions of listeners along

any direction its governors might decide upon. The B.B.C. is not free to disregard responsible criticism. As far as music is concerned it gives good evidence of not wishing to be, and its Listener Research work is aimed at making some reasoned estimate of what the musical listener wants. Yet it is strangely true to say that almost no Press criticism is forthcoming.

It is not feasible for every single broadcast performance of notable music to have a critical notice. But why is it that the occasion of a non-broadcast concert in a London or provincial hall, attended by hundreds of people, should be written up with critical comments whilst a programme, perhaps by the same orchestra and artists and perhaps of more interesting works, which is listened to by tens of thousands should be supposed to provide nothing—and invariably supposed to provide nothing—for the critic to say? There are, of course, no sound reasons for this stupid anomaly. One reason—not sound—may be the belief of editors at large that an insufficient number of people are interested. They should consult Listener Research. Another reason may be that there are not enough good critics, or that they are overworked. That is doubtful, and in any case could be remedied.

Perhaps the critics need guidance in embarking on a so-far unexplored field of work. What is it we would have them do? Such things as this, obvious enough surely:—When the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra—which can sometimes rise, or be raised, to very great heights—plays a great work with a brilliance that has not been heard before, or when a new work is given a thoroughly rehearsed launching, this should be noticed and assessed, the critic leading his readers in an attempt at proper appreciation. The experience will have done them so much more good for this guidance were they listeners as well as readers. Many who were readers only would be listeners in future . . . and, it cannot be said too strongly, here is the critic's chance to face his essential obligation—to bring masses of people nearer to the realities of the art he writes about. When a weary, under-rehearsed and, as is often the case, wholly sacrilegious effort is made at an opera in the studio, or a fifth-rate concerto is presented for the *n*th occasion in all too short memory, the critic should rise, leading thousands of listeners and all his readers in righteous fury. There is nothing at all in the way of this work; on the other hand, here, in this matter of the quality of broadcast music, sustained criticism is likely to do more that is of benefit to the art than can be the case in any other connection at this time.

As to B.B.C. music policy, we are told that the amount and the timing of good broadcast music is determined in part by adequate research into what the public wants. That is to say what that part of the public wants which listens to good music. (That "part" can be progressively enlarged as much by the efforts of frequent and well written criticism as by any educational aspect of B.B.C. broadcasts.) Policy can only be changed by people asking for a change. The clear duty of the critic is to enthuse reader-listeners and gain recruits to the ranks of the musically unsatisfied. To do this he must help to explain to the unsatisfied what it is, precisely, that is unsatisfactory and why. This again is nothing more or less than his accepted task and it should be undertaken with vigour.

Recorded music receives more regular attention in the Press than does broadcast music. That, ultimately, is simply explained by the fact that gramophone records have to be bought with cash and have to make a profit. The gramophone companies advertise in the Press, the Press receives review copies and appoints someone—in the case of some journals—to review them. A *quid pro quo*, with the recording company hoping that reviews will be favourable for everything it issues. In return for the advertisement revenue they provide it is possible that the gramophone companies consider themselves ill done-by in the matter of Press notices, for the amount of space given to recorded music in the Press generally is still very small. From the viewpoint of the record buyer who is interested in advance criticism designed to help him choose, it is negligible in the popular Press, and inadequate for the needs of those who seek art criticism and reviews in journals which specialize in such at a high level. Presumably newspaper and other editors feel that relatively few readers buy good recorded music. That may be so, but the gramophone interests patently find massive advertisements in all sections of the Press worth while, and on a basis of commercial return for interest taken they should know.

While the highly commercialized attitude of the gramophone companies has sometimes been courageously criticized, the music itself for which they are responsible—and they are showing an increasing awareness of the existence of great music which has no proven popularity in terms of the immediate wide sale of records—receives inadequate attention. After all, they cannot, on any grounds be expected to record music on the blind chance of commercial failure, and it is the critic's task to guide them no less than to guide those who would wish to buy more and better recordings. (On the question of buying records; a plain duty of every critic certain of more than a handful of readers was to agitate violently against the crippling tax on high-class recorded music. This tax can have provided the Government with no measurable revenue, and it has cut off thousands of working and professional people from a precious source of relaxation, comfort and stimulation. Few widely-read critics rose to the occasion.) It is also the critic's task to inquire into the technical aspects of music reproduction. It is far from perfect; how much more nearly perfect could it be? Since the advent of electrical reproduction, twenty years ago, and the application of radio amplification to needled-surface records there have been no publicized suggestions for improvement. It may be that none can be made to the existing system of reproduction. But in view of the very great advances in those branches of physical science concerned, namely photo-electrics, radio and acoustics, which have taken place in very recent years, it would be proper to instigate an interest in the possible existence of improved means of domestic music reproduction. One's duty to a composer is not discharged merely in the buying of records labelled with his work; one needs to be as sure as can be that one is listening to what he wrote.

The majority of Press critics are given space for notices of concerts, recitals and stage performances, which they were actually able to attend, with some

frequency.¹ Such notices are all too often compounded of tentative judgment and loose phraseology, and they are almost invariably too short to serve any real critical end. Is it asking too much of the critic that he should know why, as well as when, an inadequate performance has been given—wherein the artists have failed? It is rare indeed to find a reasoned analysis of a performance which the critic has not hesitated to say was inadequate, *i.e.* to read a criticism which conveys correctives. More than one critic tries to make a virtue of noticing wrong notes, slips of entry in the orchestra, and like peccadilloes, all of which connotes only hard listening, and is of no value unless germane to some criticism of a performance as a whole. If we learn that So-and-So played badly and started his cadenza half a bar late, how much have we learned that is of any value? Why a trained listener should think he played badly is what we want to know. A fair proportion of critics are apparently able to seize on an outstandingly good performance. Only a small fraction of that proportion states what it was that contributed to an outstandingly good performance, and that is the core of a useful laudatory criticism.

There is so much else worthy of the critic's attention, that pertains to a public performance, besides the performance itself. Programmes, for one example, audiences for another, and the policies of concert-giving organizations for still another. Many concerts and recitals earn justified and weighty criticism before a note has been played. The critic has it in his power to influence programme-building. With some honourable exceptions, programmes are not half adventurous enough and the financial backers of many established series of concerts are allowed to give far too much weight to that kind of box-office consideration which is ruining the film industry's claims to any artistic merit. (Which should remind us that the leading film critics are worthy of some notice by their musical colleagues; they hit out courageously and hard and, though their provocation may be the greater, the same principles apply to both forms of entertainment.) The critic should help the virtuosi understand how much they are losing in fame and stature and how much we are losing in entertainment and interest, by their all too common meanness in carrying only the same small handful of concertos to their graves. He should be in a position gradually to learn which conductors are best capable of carrying off which orchestral works and try to dissuade them wasting their time and our money by playing regularly works which other native conductors do better. On the positive side, the critic should go out of his way to forward the work of those organizations which are less concerned with the box-office shibboleth; for example, those who play a large proportion of contemporary works or of little-heard music of any age and nation. He should seek out and report on the artists who work for their art with the greatest degree of self-effacement, who are prepared to risk their incomes on works we are not able to hear regularly.

There is very little indication that Press critics pay any attention to the

¹ That the regular exercise of these opportunities is good for the critic and his paper as well as the musical reader is well demonstrated by the succession of first-rate critics who have graced the columns of the provincial *Manchester Guardian* which gives generous space to every "Hallé" concert and every operatic performance in the city.

teaching of music. Regular visits to our bigger schools of music would provide much rewarding material. As a result of some study of methods and atmosphere in these institutions innumerable problems of first-class importance might be ventilated. On what the responsible critic would find depends much of what we hear and what he is obliged to write.

Audiences, the end-point in the complex process of realizing the composers' work, assuredly require to be criticized. The concert-going public ought to be told how much good we are doing by making it possible for at least seven orchestras of national standing to be working several days a week, whereas before the war some three or four were not making ends meet. We should be urged to keep this up after the war and told why we very possibly shall not. We should be helped in our attitude to music by being told what more to look for in concerts than we have so far found. For example, we should be told why concertos are so much more popular with us than symphonies, why we like some of the less great composers more than some of the really great. Why, in short, we give to the organizers of our music their box-office argument, which is that we get what we appear to want to pay for: allowing them to hold, as a consequence, that a Beethoven programme should include a piano concerto, a *prima donna* should sing operatic arias instead of songs, British music should be stringently rationed, as should contemporary music of any nationality, and many other strange, reactionary beliefs.

It is not the purpose of this essay to enquire into the significance of the recent greatly increased interest in the public performance of great and near-great music. One purpose is to point out that the body of music critics can apply a great deal of directive stimulus to audiences by including a direct, educative approach amongst their proper functions.

The critics have it in their power to weaken the vicious circle of uninformed public demand (based on unformed tastes) and profitable commercial supply (based upon an assessment of that taste at minimum levels). Whether or not we are at last to assume a place as "a music-loving nation" depends in part upon their discharge of this function; and they can help to ensure that we love music in the right way and for the right reasons.

This essay is the result of the study of critical notices over the last ten years. It is appreciated that for five of those years many journals, in particular, the daily Press, have cut down the space allotted to criticism in some cases to vanishing point. This is partly offset by the fact that there has been a great increase during the war in the number of people interested in what is written, and literary papers and reviews have tended to *increase* the space devoted to music. (At the time this essay was written one valuable monthly review of literature and art which has had a deservedly increased sale over the five years of its existence included, for the first time, an essay in musical criticism among the company of "literature and art" commentaries.) In addition, the number of music journals produced by commercial houses has increased, and eminent critics contribute to them.

Music criticism is charged with an infinitely greater responsibility than it was a mere ten to twenty years ago. We have vaster audiences, wider

dissemination of reproduced music, more orchestras, more sound artists, especially young ones, and, most important of all, a body of native composers worth playing, worth listening to, and *a fortiori* worth the critics' time. If that were not enough, the bonds wrought by war have brought us nearer the musical output of two great nations, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., of whose contemporary music we knew almost nothing before the war. For these reasons it is proper to have asked the critics, and those who would be critics, to take fresh stock of their functions and grasp their new opportunities.

Correspondence

BEARSDEN, SCOTLAND.

23rd August, 1944.

To the Editor, THE MUSIC REVIEW.

SA'ADYAH GAON

SIR,—Dr. Kahle's review of the above, although highly commendatory, calls for criticism. That a reviewer should summarize the main features of a book is always to be recommended because it gives the reader a bird's eye view of what the author has accomplished. Yet, by not stating that the reviewer is actually summarizing, the author gives the reader the impression that the reviewer has "bettered the instruction".

This particular review is a case in point. It comprises seventy-six lines, most of which, save for one line in the middle and five lines at the *coda*, are a résumé of what I have stated in my book. Yet even these six lines which alone contain the original thoughts of the reviewer are (a) wrong or (b) misleading.

(a) p. 201, line 19, reads: "Farmer quotes occasionally the two Bodleian MSS. which is not correct." This statement is wrong. I do not "quote occasionally two Bodleian MSS". I once mention the Oppenheim 599 MS. That it does not contain the passage in question is already well known, since this fact is mentioned in Neubauer's *Catalogue*. What I do quote is from Pocock 17 MS. in the Bodleian.

(b) p. 201, line 34, reads: "Dr. Farmer can now give in Chapter IX of his book, a real interpretation of the Rhythmic Modes . . . and compare these theories . . . etc." (*Italics mine.*) This present tense phrase is misleading since it leads the unwary to infer, after what the reviewer has said in the preceding seventy lines (which is a résumé of my own arguments), that "Dr. Farmer can now give . . . and compare . . . etc." Perhaps the reviewer had intended to say: "Dr. Farmer has now given . . . and has compared . . . etc."

Yours faithfully,

HENRY G. FARMER.

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Contingencies

BY

CECIL GRAY

PART II

[Continued from p. 162]

THE recognition of the truth of the contention made in the last sentence of the foregoing instalment—namely, that without a substratum of popular appeal, no art can be healthy or vital—has brought about in recent years the development of an activity known as “musical appreciation”, which aims at fostering a love of music among the populace by means of broadcast lectures, evening classes, elementary handbooks and textbooks, educational gramophone records, and so forth; by teaching music, in a word, in very much the same way as one would teach any other subject in the educational curriculum. The belief is even entertained that it is possible to inculcate an understanding of the most “advanced” music, provided the student works long enough and hard enough at it, as he would at the differential calculus, or quadratic equations.

With all respect to the many well-meaning, devoted and enthusiastic members of this faculty of musical appreciation, one cannot help feeling that their activities are based upon a complete fallacy, namely that it is possible for aesthetic sensibility to be imparted or acquired, or even developed, by any such methods of spiritual jerks or intellectual Sandow exercisers. The foundation of all aesthetic enjoyment lies in the direct, unfettered, unreflecting response to a sensual, emotional, imaginative experience, and no amount of lectures or evening classes can take its place, nor can they enhance it. The musical appreciationists make the mistake of starting at the wrong end, from what should be the final stage of aesthetic appreciation—the intellectual and analytical—and working backwards in the hope of arriving at the first—pure enjoyment. It cannot be done. It is like attempting to produce the flower or blossom without first cultivating the plant.

A direct, emotional response even to a comparatively unworthy object will take one further on the way to genuine aesthetic understanding than any number of courses of musical appreciation. In other words, it is better to enjoy wholeheartedly, say, a march of Sousa or a waltz of Lehar, than to be able to make a thematic analysis of a Beethoven sonata and yet remain unmoved by it, or less moved by it than by Sousa and Lehar. *Bonum est in quod tendit appetitus*—the good is that towards which the appetite tends—thus spake St. Thomas Aquinas. These words should be printed in letters of gold over the portico of every concert hall and opera house in the world. They are the foundation stone of all true aesthetic experience.¹

¹ Compare this with the utterance of the great modern English painter, Walter Sickert: “Pleasure, and pleasure alone, is the proper purpose of art”.

The musical appreciation movement no doubt has its uses. It may be of value to those who already react emotionally and instinctively and directly, and serve to deepen their pleasure by adding to it a certain intellectual element, but it is very doubtful. This aspect of musical art, the intellectual and analytical, is best left to the active practitioner and withheld from the passive recipient. It is valuable and even necessary to the composer, the critic, the executant, but the ordinary listener is better without it. In art as in everything else, a little learning is a dangerous thing, and often does more harm than good.

Again, while it is certainly undeniable that the activities of the musical appreciationists have resulted in a greatly increased superficial interest in music on the part of a large section of the general public which had previously never paid any attention to it, there is an inverse side to the picture which usually escapes attention.

A little mass observation and Gallup surveyance in public places and public houses, carried out by the present writer, tends to confirm the belief that for every convert enlisted in the ranks of music-lovers by the appreciationists, at least two more are antagonized, through being led to imagine that music is a thing one has to be "educated up to" before one can hope to enjoy it, instead of, as it should be, pleasure, first and foremost, and all the time; to which, later perhaps, other more intellectual, but less important and vital experiences may be added. Any suggestion of uplift or education in connection with pleasure inevitably tends to put off more people than it attracts, however unjust and wrong-headed and pig-headed this may be. We all know from personal experience that when children are told that rice or sago pudding or spinach is "good for them" they automatically distrust and avoid these things, and the average adult is in no way different when it comes to art. The faintest suggestion, the slightest hint of improving his mind or cultivating his soul makes him as restive as a wild horse; he whinnies, paws the ground, and makes off as hard as he can go.

One should aim rather at making it clear that art is primarily pleasure, like eating, drinking, or copulation, only more lasting and intense, and with none of the disadvantages that attach to over-indulgence in these otherwise delectable activities. It would even be better if one could teach people to regard indulgence in art as a vice rather than as a virtue. One would like to see them sneak furtively into concert halls as if they were public houses, in order to have a quick one before closing time—anything would be better than this atmosphere of education, uplift, improvement. These latter elements are present in great art, of course, but they are incidental; we should not mention them, any more than one should mention to the child the powder that is concealed in the spoonful of jam. If you emphasize the good that the powder is going to do, you will only succeed in making him suspicious, even when you offer him a spoonful of jam and nothing else. And actually, of course, that is what art essentially is—a spoonful of jam. One should try to induce people to regard music as children regard jam. It is only the beginning, admittedly, but it is a

necessary beginning, the only possible beginning. *Bonum est in quod tendit appetitus.*

In this important connection a little anecdote will be instructive, the truth of which can be vouched for, since it came to us at first hand. There was once a small boy, a member of what used to be called "the upper middle class", who was brought up, like most members of that class, to have a deep-rooted distrust and contempt of art, and especially "classical" music. He possessed a gramophone, and his taste was deplorable, his records consisting exclusively of vulgar comic songs, popular sentimental ballads, cheap waltzes, and so forth. One day he bought by chance a record entitled *Carmen March*, under the blissful delusion that the title referred to the carmen for whom one used to see signs outside cafés inviting them to a "good pull up"—a curious title for a march, admittedly, but this did not occur to him. It was, of course, an arrangement of various themes from the opera of that name. On playing it, he found that he enjoyed it far more than all his other records. On discovering his ridiculous mistake in the matter of the title he was emboldened to progress further on the path thus accidentally opened up to him and, to cut a long story short, this small boy—now middle aged, alas, enjoys his Bartók, Berg, and Schönberg with the best of them.

This is an extreme case, no doubt, but it is typical of what is going on all the time, as a result of the deeply ingrained distrust and suspicion and dislike of any kind of educational or moral uplift in the British public in connection with art. The boy would not have bought that record if he had known it was a piece of "classical" music, as the saying is. This prejudice is not as strong to-day, perhaps, as it used to be, but it is still much stronger than many people realize; and musical appreciation, with its educational approach, undoubtedly tends to strengthen this antagonism to art in the mind of the ordinary man in the street, to a far greater extent than it develops an already existent love of it in a certain smaller section of the community.

In the higher strata of society this national prejudice against all art, and especially music, has its roots largely in the attitude of mind and code of moral and ethical values formerly inculcated at our public schools and universities; what Messrs. Robert Graves and Alan Hodge in *The Long Week End* describe as "the Spartan virtues of modesty, reticence, courage, generosity, loyalty, personal cleanliness, and general decency. . . . With the Spartan virtues went the Spartan prejudice against all things artistic, eccentric, abstract, poetic, studious, foreign, or feminine".

This is a perfectly accurate diagnosis. The personification of the qualities enumerated above is the absolute antithesis of everything that is implied in the word "art". The English Gentleman, who is the final perfected product of our methods of education and psychological training, is the complete Philistine—the Philistine in the mind of God, to speak platonically. He is, of course, the very type of the man of action, the administrator, the civil servant, the statesman, and very successful the ideal has been in achieving the purpose for which it was intended.

It is, in fact, no part of our intention here to decry the ideal of the English

Gentleman. The Bloomsbury intellectuals and the aesthetes who are accustomed to sneer at it are quite wrong to do so. "Modesty, reticence, endurance, courage, generosity, loyalty" and the rest of it—these are all very fine qualities indeed, and only a fool would sneer at them. The best type of English Gentleman is in many ways the salt of the earth, but, unfortunately, it is an ideal which is, inevitably and necessarily, achieved at the expense of all the qualities—virtues and vices—which go to the making of great art and great artists. Every human ideal demands the sacrifice, the extirpation of all qualities which conflict with it, and the English Gentleman, like the Confucian Sage and the Medieval Saint, is the perfected product of an age-long tradition and a life-long discipline which, however admirable in many ways, are bound of their nature to be rigidly exclusive. In short, to be a gentleman is a fine ideal, and one that is difficult of achievement. It requires enormous self-discipline, self-sacrifice, and a genuine nobility of character. To be a perfect gentleman is in a very real sense to achieve a work of art, but it is a form of art that excludes all others.

Let us look once more at the catalogue of virtues personified in the ideal of the English Gentleman, and apply them to the artist as we know him. The artist is not modest, or reticent; if he seems to be, it is only a pose, or a mask. More often than not he is a physical coward, mean, disloyal, and by no means devoted to personal cleanliness and general decency. In fact, the greater the artist, the less he exemplifies these admirable virtues enumerated above, and the more he exemplifies them, the less great an artist he is likely to be.

The artist is not a gentleman, in short, and it is customary in this country to bewail the fact, and to express amazement at what is naively supposed to be an inexplicable duality—a kind of Jekyll and Hyde business. The commonest criticism of Wagner, for example, is that he was a great artist, but a cad—as if he could be anything else. All artists are cads; it is impossible to be at the same time a great artist and an English Gentleman, just as it is impossible to be a great artist and a politician. (It need hardly be added that it is equally impossible to be an English Gentleman and a successful politician.) Chose which you will, but do not try to achieve both—it cannot be done. You will only fail at both. This was the tragedy of Elgar, born of his environment. He tried to be a great artist and a great gentleman, but he just failed to become either one or the other. To quote once more from Mr. Cyril Connolly's *Enemies of Promise*:

"It is no exaggeration to say that every English writer since Byron has been hamstrung by respectability, and been prevented by snobbery and moral cowardice from attaining his full dimensions. It is this blight of insular gentility that accounts for the difference between Dickens, Thackeray, Arnold, Tennyson, Pater—and Tolstoi, Flaubert, Rimbaud, Baudelaire, Gide; it is the difference between being a good fellow and growing up",

and it is this blight of insular gentility that chiefly accounts for the difference between Parry, Elgar and Vaughan Williams—and Strauss, Debussy and Stravinsky.

Music, incidentally, is the art which in its essence, more than any other,

is most in opposition to the ideal of the English Gentleman, and the musician is the most complete embodiment of all the qualities which are most repugnant to the public school and university tradition—"artistic, abstract, poetic, studious, feminine and foreign"—especially the two latter. Music, in fact, in orthodox English eyes, has been regarded as essentially an occupation for foreigners, and a recreation for women.

As a natural and automatic reaction against the cult of the English public-school-tie gentleman, we find the equally English phenomenon of the aesthete or intellectual, embodying, deliberately and self-consciously, all the qualities and defects which stand at the opposite pole to those enumerated above by Messrs. Graves and Hodge. He is the reverse of the coin, that is all; the product of a reaction against environment. The Philistine and Aesthete are at bottom one and the same, brothers under their skins. They accept the same values: the one positively, and the other negatively by reacting against them and mechanically inverting them.

It is difficult to say which is worse, from the point of view of art—the Philistine or the Aesthete. There is not much to choose between them. One might say that their chief difference consists in the fact that whereas the former likes the wrong things in the right way, the latter likes the right things in the wrong way. On the whole, one prefers the honest Philistine, if only on purely human and social grounds. The aesthete is almost invariably detestable, quite apart from his almost invariably homosexual propensities—which brings us to one of the most difficult yet important problems we are called upon to consider in these pages. Naturally, we shall not be able to do more than touch on the fringe of a vast and complex subject.

In the seventies and eighties of last century, largely as the result of the activities of Ruskin, Morris, Rossetti, Swinburne, Pater, and others, it almost seemed for a moment as if England, after a period of eclipse, might once more become a civilized country in which art might hold an honoured position as in former days. Then there appeared upon the scene a talented Irish mountebank named Oscar Fingal O'Flaherty Wills Wilde, who succeeded in turning this promising artistic renaissance into an instrument for his own aggrandisement and notoriety. The art-movement became identified with Wilde, in the public mind, and was consequently involved in his ignominious fate.

The trial and conviction of Wilde were, in fact, a major disaster to the cause of art in this country, the importance of which cannot be exaggerated, and the effects of which have persisted up to the present time. In the public mind the name of Wilde became synonymous with the title of artist, and the title of artist with the practice of homosexuality. Even to-day, in this country, to be an artist is to be *a priori* sexually suspect in the eyes of the man in the street. Art and pederasty are indissolubly associated in his mind.

The trouble is that—Wilde apart—it is so often justified. The innocent reader would no doubt be surprised to learn how many of the most eminent and respected figures in the world of art to-day are known to have leanings in this direction, to put it mildly. The laws of libel, naturally, forbid individual specification.

The problem is a difficult one. The fact is, and has to be faced, that homosexuality is nearly always indicative of an advanced level of intelligence and artistic sensibility. The explanation of this disconcerting but incontrovertible phenomenon is probably to be found in the fact, that, while most normal males pass through a brief homosexual period during puberty or adolescence, they quickly emerge from it, whereas the specific homosexual remains at that stage; and this arrested sexual development, in accordance with the rules of the law of compensation, leads to an accelerated and intensified development of other faculties. This would account for the majority of such cases, but they are very seldom, if ever, creative artists of any stature or significance, belonging rather to the category of aesthetes—persons of sensibility and understanding, receptive rather than productive.

It is a very different matter when we come to consider the homosexual element which indisputably exists in some of the greatest masters, such as Shakespeare or Michael Angelo. The greater an artist is, the more he includes, the wider his range of feeling and sympathy and susceptibility; in consequence of which his all-embracing circumference will inevitably contain, together with everything else, a certain streak of homosexuality. But that is not to say that Shakespeare or Michael Angelo were homosexual in the ordinary sense of the word, as defined above. Their whole mental outlook was not coloured by it, and determined by it throughout, as in the case of these others. They just happened to be homosexual as well as everything else—they included it, they took it in their stride, as it were.

A streak of homosexuality, in fact, and even a big fat slice of it, is probably present in every great artist, every outstandingly intelligent person; but it is only when it exceeds 50 per cent. that we can legitimately call him homosexual.

Actually there is probably no such thing as a 100 per cent. male, or female, for that matter. Even those specimens of the human race who are as much as 90 per cent. male or female are generally intolerable, and exceedingly stupid and insensitive. Homosexuality, indeed, appears to be a kind of leaven mitigating the monstrosity of the absolute male and the absolute female. It is probably even true to say that the pleasantest and most civilized and intelligent members of the human race are essentially hermaphroditic, possessing the characteristics of both sexes in almost equal proportions. It is only when the foreign element, so to speak, preponderates, that the trouble starts. For while a certain proportion of homosexuality is not merely desirable, but essential in an artist, as indicated above, it is an unmitigated disaster when it amounts to an overplus. After all, sexual relationships are among the most important things in life, and are the source of all great art, however sublimated—perhaps most of all when sublimated. If this root is twisted and distorted, if this source is turned back on itself, the result must inevitably be an unnatural growth.

No 50 or more per cent. homosexual can ever be a great artist. It will always and inevitably come out in his work in the form of a lack of balance or proportion, a false perspective. It is customary on the part of those who share homosexual propensities to refer to themselves and each other as being "queer", and the expression is a singularly happy and accurate one. Extreme and

even excessive sensibility to some things goes together with complete anaesthesia to others; the balance is destroyed, and values are inverted.

A good example of this is to be found in Marcel Proust. Any discerning reader of *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* must inevitably experience an uneasy sense of something unnatural and unconvincing in the loves of the hero (Proust himself, of course) and Albertine. It does not ring true; with all its intensity and power there is something odd about it, which is explained by the simple fact that Albertine in actual life was not a woman at all, but a young man. Proust, for reasons of his own, has tried to transfer or transcribe homosexual love into terms of normal heterosexual love, and it simply does not work, because the two things are entirely different—they belong to separate worlds, and have nothing in common.

A simple analogy may help to make this important point clearer. To us who live on the north side of the equator the concepts of spring, Christmas, the north wind, the south wind, and so forth, have definite connotations, but for those who live on the other side, say in Argentina, the words convey precisely the contrary. The north wind is the balmy zephyr for them, the south wind is a cold blast from the Antarctic icefields, Christmas is tropically hot, spring is deciduous, and so on. The Argentine poet, then, who wishes to address himself to the understanding and sensibility of the European reader can only do so by mechanically transposing and inverting his imagery, which cannot be done without a hollow inner falsity, a kind of spiritual discord. And so it is with homosexuals; they speak a different language by nature, and when they seek to speak the language of normality we at once perceive there is something wrong—their utterance is unconvincing.

Particularly is this true of music which is, of course, the art with which we are chiefly concerned. It is a remarkable fact that this art which, paradoxically, is the one which in the eyes of the average Englishman, is the most effeminately suspect of them all (as already observed in the foregoing instalment of this essay) should be the one to which the creative contribution of women and homosexuals is the smallest. In the whole history of music there is not a single outstanding female composer, and up to the present time only one male homosexual of eminence, namely Tchaikovsky. From the creative point of view, in fact, music is, of all the arts, the most uncompromisingly masculine and virile.

How is this to be explained? Quite simply. As I have sought to show in my *Survey of Contemporary Music* and *The History of Music*—and I have yet to encounter a convincing denial or refutation of the thesis there set forth—music is the romantic art *par excellence*—the art in which the romantic values are most completely and perfectly expressed. (Do not expect here a definition of the romantic element in art. It would require a disproportionate amount of space, and in any case I have already attempted to provide one in the opening and closing chapters respectively of the two books above mentioned, to which readers are referred for fuller discussion and development. It is enough for the moment to say that although romanticism may be difficult to define, we all know what it connotes and implies.) And at the very centre of the circle

around which the romantic values are described, in whatever age or clime you may find it—for it is universal and perennial, ever-recurring throughout time and space—one finds the cult of the adoration of woman in some form or other. In short, the Christian, Medieval, Romantic values—they are all in essence the same thing—revolve around the idealization and idolization of woman, as exemplified in the cult of the Virgin, in the love of the troubadour Jaufre Rudel for the Princess of Tripoli (whom he had never seen), in the mystic passion of Dante for Beatrice, of Petrarch for Laura, in the conceptions of the *Ewig Weibliche* of Goethe, the *idée fixe* of Berlioz, and the various Salvation Army *redemptresses* of Wagner.

I am far from wishing to suggest that all or even any of these manifestations of gyneolatry are necessarily admirable or desirable. On the contrary, it is probable that the feministic bias of modern western democracy, which is largely a consequence of these concepts, is wholly deplorable. But that is neither here nor there. We are only concerned at the present moment with a specific aesthetic issue, which is best summed up in the following inescapable syllogism; (a) music is the romantic art *par excellence*; (b) the romantic element in art, wherever we find it, immutably revolves around some manifestation or other of the worship of the feminine principle; (c) the musician, as such, is inevitably and ineluctably a lover of womanhood. It therefore necessarily follows that no homosexual, except perhaps a Lesbian, can possibly be a great composer. The truth of this generalization needs no further confirmation than that which is afforded by historic fact, namely that, as already observed, one can only find one possible exception to the rule in the history of music, and even this one is by no means of the first rank. Moreover, it requires no particular degree of insight to note that this tendency is written large over all Tchaikovsky's work. It betrays itself especially in his inveterate propensity for lapsing into mincing waltzes, and in the fact that his best work lies in the field of the ballet. He is indeed, the ideal composer of ballet music—there is no better—but he is little else. Even his symphonies are for the most part merely ballets in disguise, and when Massine transformed his Fifth Symphony into a ballet one felt that it was being recreated in the medium to which it properly belonged—which one certainly could not say of the lamentable travesties perpetrated by Massine upon the Fourth Symphony of Brahms or the *Symphonie Fantastique* of Berlioz.

Ballet, in fact, is the homosexual art-form *par excellence*, and if the numerous homosexual composers at work in this country at the present time would take a word of kindly advice, they would confine their energies to the cultivation of this form, for it is the only one in which they can ever hope to succeed.

In view of what has been said above, it is no mere coincidence, but only what one would naturally expect, that one should find the most complete and perfect example of the homosexual in art to be that provided by the person and activities of the famous Russian impresario, Serge Diaghilev and his ballet, and in the enormous influence it has exerted—particularly, and significantly so, in this country. Despite the very considerable artistic merits of his productions

and his undoubted flair for selecting the finest contemporary talents to serve his aesthetic purposes, one need have no hesitation now in saying that the influence which Diaghilev and his organization have had on art in this country has been wholly disastrous—firstly, in its direct influence on creative art; secondly, by confirming in the mind of the British public their already deeply ingrained belief in the fundamental relationship between art and homosexuality. We found ourselves back, in fact, in the “naughty nineties”, with Oscar and Aubrey and the old Yellow Book all over again. The psychological atmosphere was identically the same. Homosexual art—in so far as it exists—never progresses, never develops, it will be noticed; it is always the same throughout the ages. And at performances of the Russian Ballet the character of the audience was frequently such as to render one’s presence in the midst of it—if one happened to be comparatively normal—so acutely distasteful that one preferred to stay away altogether, missing thereby, no doubt, many otherwise enjoyable artistic experiences.

To-day in this country the ballet cult seems stronger than ever. It was practically the only form of artistic activity which, so far from having been halted by the war, had a positively new accession of strength. While the pre-war stream of concerts, plays, and operas, dwindled, during the first years of the war, into a mere trickle, new ballet companies came into existence every few weeks, and attracted large, uncritically enthusiastic, and fatuously hysterical audiences, which still continue.

There are, of course, other psychological reasons for the ballet vogue at the present time besides its appeal to homosexuals. The cult of the dance is invariably in evidence during the period of the decline and decay of a civilization, and in times of war, famine, and pestilence. The jazz-cult, is, on a lower aesthetic level, another symptom of the same historical and hysterical conditions. Whatever the future of art may be after the war, we can at least be fairly sure that it will not take the form of a continuation of this *danse macabre*, this St. Vitus dance, which belongs to the world of yesterday, and is only the galvanic twitching of a corpse—like a chicken which runs around in circles after its head has been chopped off.

Incidentally it should be made clear, that in all that has been said above concerning homosexuality there is no suggestion of puritanism or any implication of moral disapproval attached to it—one’s objections lie solely on artistic and aesthetic grounds. Those who have these tastes are at perfect liberty, so far as we are concerned, to indulge them “to the top of their bent”, as Henry James would say, and we sincerely wish them all the fun they can get out of it. All one asks is that they should refrain from attempting to practise the arts creatively, and music in particular, which is the most exclusively and uncompromisingly masculine of them all; and secondly, that they should not be placed in a position of influence or responsibility, not only because everything they do is coloured by their peculiar predilections, as is natural and inevitable, but also because of the subtle, pervasive system of freemasonry which they practise on each other’s behalf. In this respect, indeed, they constitute a formidable menace in every artistic sphere in which they are active.

Of all forms of freemasonry, in fact, that of the freemasons is the mildest and most innocuous. Next in order of comparative harmlessness is that practised by the Scots, then that of the university and public school fraternity, then that of the Jews; but last and most powerful of all is that exerted by the homosexuals. From being a persecuted minority, like the Jews, they have gradually established themselves in a dominating position in much the same way. In the theatre to-day, as any actor or producer will tell you, it is notoriously difficult to succeed unless one enjoys their favour and influence. In music the same situation, if hardly as yet in such an acute stage, is nevertheless rapidly developing in the same direction.

On the other hand, homosexuals, precisely because of their creative incapacity, probably constitute the most sensitive and intelligent section of the artistic community in the passive and receptive sense, and the world of art would be very much the poorer without their sympathetic understanding and discriminating patronage of deserving artistic enterprises of every kind. The fact remains that they are by nature fundamentally parasitic—neither wholly creative nor wholly receptive, neither completely artists nor completely spectators, but partaking of both without ever quite becoming either one or the other—intermediate, in fact, in this as in other things.

Another species of morbid growth on the body of art generally—by no means confined to this country, as is largely the homosexual aesthetic type—is to be found in that infinite multitude to which Mr. Jacob Epstein refers in his recent autobiography *Let there be Sculpture*, of “log-rollers, schemers, sharks, opportunists, profiteers” etc. who, in his experience, infest the world of sculpture and painting. Mr. Epstein is greatly mistaken if he supposes that this phenomenon is confined to the world of sculpture and painting; it is just as much in evidence in the world of music, if not more so, indeed. In the same way that the fairest countries in the world seem to be those which give rise to the largest number of minor drawbacks and discomforts and inconveniences—the beggars, the hotel-keepers, the mosquitoes, and other insects—so the noblest realms of the spirit seem to furnish the most favourable breeding ground for parasites and pests of every kind. During the first months of the war they all scuttled away into obscurity. It was good to be free of them, to breathe the pure, antiseptic, if sterile, air of the desert, to be alone with oneself in the wilderness. But since then they have returned, in even greater force than ever before. This is due to several causes. Firstly, as a result of the strict rationing of almost all commodities, and the consequent restriction of expenditure on them, the world of art has enjoyed a vast if largely artificial boom as an outlet of superfluous financial resources, in which music has naturally shared. Secondly, the native variety of Mr. Epstein’s “log-rollers, schemers, sharks, opportunists and profiteers” has been formidably reinforced by an enormous influx of Central European refugees, largely of Jewish extraction, compared to whom, in technical virtuosity, our home-product is as a tallow candle to a thousand kilowatt arc-lamp. The consequence has been that, between the two varieties of thugs, the native and the foreign, the fair art of Apollo and Euterpe has become the happy hunting-ground of a rout of commercial speculators and

profiteers. Music has become a black market, a "racket". The position, indeed, is precisely parallel to that which obtained in Prohibition days, in Chicago, under the rival gangs of Al Capone and Bugs Moran. The only difference consists in the fact that our rival musical gangsters have not yet taken to bumping each other off with sawn-off shotguns. One would welcome the salutary consequences of such a war of extermination, but, unfortunately, unlike their Chicago colleagues, our musical gangsters are much too clever for that. The only way in which to get rid of them—which must be done—is to diminish, if not to eliminate altogether, the financial inducements which alone attract this ignoble pullulation of the lower forms of life around the temple of the arts. In order to get rid of tapeworm, it is instructive to note, the only cure is to starve oneself, while seated on a chamber-pot filled with warm milk. After some days of this agonizing and Spartan regime the intruding parasite reluctantly decides to change its quarters, which it does through the highly appropriate orifice. The bowl of warm milk, after the war, will, of course, be America.

To a great extent this condition will operate automatically. In this country after the war there will not be the same amount of money to be made out of art as there was before, and that will be all to the good in more ways than one. As we have already said earlier in this essay, the chief trouble with art before the war was, not that there was too little money spent on it, and made out of it, but too much. That its distribution was unequal and unjust, as in every other walk of life, is true, but the fact remains that its reduction is a necessary condition to artistic health. The fantastically bloated salaries paid to eminent *virtuosi*, whether singers, players or conductors, the inflated performing-right fees earned by certain composers, and worst of all, parasitic "arrangements" of other people's ideas—all this must go.

This is not to subscribe to the outmoded romantic notion that it is good for an artist to starve in a garret—that hunger is a necessary condition for the production of masterpieces. No great achievement in art has ever been accomplished on an empty stomach—feats of saintliness, perhaps, but that is a very different thing. Nothing devitalizes the mind more than hunger, and while this is perhaps a necessary condition of saintliness—which demands a hollow vacancy to be filled by the breath of Godhead—it is at the opposite pole to art which demands that one should be well fed. Art, like nature, abhors a vacuum. But if there is a greater deterrent to artistic achievement than hunger, misery, poverty, it is ease, wealth, prosperity. We praise, and rightly, the man who triumphs over all obstacles and adversities; but equal, if not greater, praise is due to him who triumphs over all advantages, who keeps his soul intact in the face of recognition, fame, success, wealth. One can certainly think of many examples of the former, but very few of the latter, in modern times. It is more than probable, for example, that his immense success was largely responsible for the spectacular decline of Richard Strauss, and he is typical of what seems to happen sooner or later to all contemporary artists who achieve fame and prosperity.

If both poverty and riches are antagonistic to art, what, it may be asked,

is the solution to the problem? The ideal would probably be for artists to have a small independent income, like Manet or Cézanne; enough to keep them without financial worries and preoccupations, but not enough for a life of ease and self-indulgence. Few artists, however, have enjoyed this condition, and in future there will be even fewer—if indeed, any private incomes are left after the war. Similarly, the solution afforded by the rich and enlightened patron of former times is not likely to survive in future.

The answer is to be found in the medieval institution of the "corrody", as it was called, in accordance with which a monastery would provide food, lodging, clothing, and all other necessities to scholars and artists, and would take their work in return. Under such conditions, free from the ceaseless preoccupation of earning a living, and at the same time protected against the equally soul-destroying effects of too great prosperity, it was found that artists did their best work.

Already, incidentally, a very similar principle is to be found in operation in Soviet Russia. Unfortunately, however, it is there vitiated by the obligation laid upon the artist of producing an ideologically orthodox kind of work, and also of comporting himself in strict conformity with the Communist code of morality. In this connection see the sad fate of the composer Mossolov, as recorded in Kurt London's book on the arts in Soviet Russia: "his life was full of women and alcohol, which was considered unsuitable for a young Soviet artist—he was dropped". (There is an ominous sound in the last three words, as of a stone falling down a deep well.) That, of course, is where the Soviet system is bound to fail, for women and alcohol are a necessity to most artists, and should be amply provided for in our ideal corrody. Domesticity and art, on the other hand, do not run well in harness. Apart from Bach it is difficult to think of a great artist who has also succeeded in being a good family man. It is one of the many things for which we rightly venerate him, but it is not a model for lesser men to imitate. As we have already had occasion to observe in connection with politics and the ideal of the English Gentleman, art and domesticity are both whole-time jobs, and he who attempts both must sooner or later make up his mind which of the two he is going to sacrifice, the alternative being to fail at both. Family life, then, would be not perhaps forbidden, but gently discouraged, in our ideal corrody.

Joking apart, however, some such system of State subsidy for the artist must come about in order to take the place of the rapidly vanishing, if not already extinct type of the patron, or Maecenas. Together with this ideal of a modest, comfortable sufficiency for the artist, and freedom from material cares, in place of the old alternative of excessive opulence on the one hand and indigence on the other, will go a similar change in the quality of art itself, and in the public response to it. No longer must art be a luxury for the few, and non-existent for the many except in a debased form. The soul-starved masses of the old order, like the body-starved masses, were a disgrace to our so-called civilization. Art must once more become for all what it originally was, a spiritual necessity.

Luxury, luxuriousness, opulence, these are the primary and essential characteristics of the art of the period which is over, of what for convenience we call the democratic, plutocratic order. The music of Richard Strauss, for example, is of a piece with the *Hotel Splendide*, champagne, caviare, oysters and *paté de fois gras* of the Edwardian era. The same applies to most of his contemporaries and immediate successors, such as Mahler, the early Schönberg of the *Gurrelieder*, and countless other examples. The characteristic vice of overscoring is significant—it is the gesture of the *nouveau riche*, the millionaire, the self-made man of art. The more money it cost, that was the test of excellence.

The art of the succeeding phase of the period, best typified by Stravinsky, is of a more subtle order, but remains essentially the same at bottom. His is the luxury of the cocktail bar and chromium-plated steel furniture; rather uncomfortable but *chic* and elegant, discomfort *de luxe* in place of comfort *de luxe*—but always *de luxe*. This kind of art has its parallel in fashionable slimming cures, the voluntary self-starvation of the rich, Miss Greta Garbo's diet of carrot juice, the self-imposed martyrdom of winter sports in Switzerland or Scandinavia, with its accompaniment of broken limbs, and enduring the agony of peeling skin on torrid Mediterranean beaches at the height of summer, in order to achieve the fashionable beige tint. But perhaps the best symbolic embodiment of the spirit of the age is to be found in Gourdjieff's institution at Fontainebleau, where millionaires, duchesses and others would pay the master fabulous sums in return for the privilege of scrubbing his floors, breaking stones, and weeding the garden. Austerity *de luxe*, in fact, and the keynote of it all is ostentation, display, vulgarity—above all, vulgarity.

The art of every period has its qualities and its defects. Classical art, in decline or decay, tends towards aridity, desiccation, anaemia. Romantic art in decline and decay runs to fat, becomes vulgar. And never since the days of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, when we find exactly the same thing (see Petronius, who, however, distilled an exquisite essence from its corruption, as scent is distilled from the secretions of the civet cat), has life and with it art, been vulgar in the way in which it is vulgar to-day—or, rather, was yesterday. It is the supreme, the unforgivable vice of the art of the past century, the age of middle-class civilization, of the dominance of the *bourgeoisie*. Even the finest artists of the age, in their weaker moments, lapse into vulgarity. Nothing, for example, could be more blatantly vulgar than Keats at his worst. Almost the only great nineteenth-century artist who is completely free from it is Berlioz. In his weaker moments he may be pompous, or coarse, or vacuous, but he is never vulgar; he oscillates between the aristocratic and the plebeian. He is never middle-class in either his strength or his weakness, and this is the chief reason why his art has as yet never been properly appreciated. He does not belong to his period.

For the rest, practically all are tainted by it, even those who are well aware of it, and react most violently against it. No one, for example, has diagnosed the disease more accurately and eloquently than Mr. Aldous Huxley, or satirized it so pungently; but nothing could be more vulgar than much of his own fiction. And the root cause of this unescapable vulgarity of our pre-war

civilization is to be found in the worship of money, of riches, of material success and prosperity.

Well, all that has gone, or is going, and vulgarity will pass with it. There is no more certain antidote to vulgarity than suffering. Suffering ennobles, and this decadent vulgarity of the old world is being burnt out of us in the fierce furnace through which we are passing, and from which we shall inevitably emerge purified and refined.

After the most artificial and unreal period in history, we of to-day have been experiencing reality as no other people have before, to the same extent, in the form of the daily confrontation of death by all. There is no escape from it, rich and poor alike face the same conditions. At the beginning of the essay, it will be remembered, we put forward the thesis that art is reality in its purest and most essential form, and that art is most vital in a state of society which is in touch with the realities of human experience. It is consequently reasonable to assume that as a result of the ordeal through which we are passing there will eventually spring a re-awakening of a genuine desire for art on the part of ordinary men and women, and a re-birth and revitalization of art itself. It is in this belief that the present essay is written.

[To be concluded.]

Reviews of Music

Richard Hall. *Pastorale Du Nord* (for organ). (O.U.P.) 2s.

There is a folk-lore touch in Mr. Hall's *Pastorale*, but in all its non-committal friendliness we fail to recognize a purpose, a formal device, a melodic problem, a descriptive idea or anything that would stimulate our interest and imagination. It walks along aimlessly, gently, smilingly; it may cease at any moment or go on for another page or two.

There is so much music of this type already in existence that one is tempted to ask what was the intention of the publishers when they decided on the publication of just this piece. Perhaps the composer, too, might consider again what function his music should fulfil and whether he could not write anything more vital.

David Branson. *Phillida*, Song with piano. (O.U.P.) 2s.

To judge from *Phillida*, David Branson is pleasantly gifted as a writer of light lyrical songs. This one is well suited to a mezzo-soprano or baritone voice. There are slight traces of both the Elizabethan air and nineteenth-century English folk-song. The composition is not very original, but it certainly compares favourably with most pieces of this type.

E. H. M.

Henry Franklin Belknap Gilbert

BY

H. G. SEAR

HE came of a solid line of Americans. One or two of his contemporary kinsmen have monographs in the Dictionary of American Biography as long as his own: a notable actor, a ballad-composer. His father, a church organist, composed anthems and enjoyed the democratic name of Benjamin Franklin; his mother was a professional singer. There was a Lieutenant Ezekiel Belknap "of Revolutionary fame" in the family, hence his third name. These facts are not lined up as an argument for heredity, but rather of tradition. For what they are worth they are partly accountable for his musical predilections.

The influence of Ole Bull should be viewed open-eyed. It was not only that it determined the boy to study the violin. Bull was not the classical violinist: he played folk-stuff to perfection; he almost exuded folk-stuff; the Americanism of the Gilberts must have leapt to meet the Scandinavianism of Bull; it will have been a topic of conversation before a curiously sensitive boy. Then there is MacDowell, whose composition-pupil Gilbert became. At heart MacDowell was a European romantic, but a responsible man; almost an American. He leaned towards Indian themes, possibly because they were "nobler" than Negro tunes; but he leaned towards them. Cadman, who really understood Indian music, spoke highly of the *Indian Suite* because, in his opinion, MacDowell did not over-idealize or under-idealize the themes; but the excursion was described by D. G. Mason as an artist's holiday.

By this time Gilbert was a folk-tune enthusiast, and it seems probable that he influenced his master more than the master influenced him; the important fact is that MacDowell was sympathetic.

Gilbert's outside subjects must not be overlooked: an intense interest in natural history which must have served to check up on his studies in folklore; a useful provision even though his leanings were not specially sentimental. There followed an equally intense study of Oriental music which doubtless widened his rhythmic sense. It is significant that Gilbert always seemed to avoid orthodox sources as if by instinct. Hence the fascination with which Moussorgsky gripped him; hence eventually, a roughness, sometimes called crudeness, in his own style. And, finally, the odd salience that landed him in Paris in order to hear Charpentier's socialistic opera, *Louise*.

A very serious man; a very serious musician, but racy, a little undignified by ordinary standards, a little raw and a little irreverent. But, then, an American; and, after all, seen through British eyes, which find it a little difficult to credit a still-green nation with high artistic achievements. We hear their music formalistically, disregarding its content. That is why it is necessary to rehearse the known facts about Gilbert: his names, his family traditions, Ole Bull, the colour question, the Indian problem; live things for him; academic

considerations for us. Gilbert's America is in all these. Not merely the America of Rockefeller, Morgan or Theodore Roosevelt, or even Franklin Roosevelt, the Chase Bank, the skyscrapers; but the America in which cheap Negro labour dragged white labour down into poor white trash; in which Indians were enclosed. An impudent, uproarious, curiously facile America, optimistic, vigorous. All these things enter a computation of Gilbert's art. You see how these thronging peoples, and Tom Paine, Washington, John Brown, Abe Lincoln, subtly mould a music.

One point more: Gilbert suffered from a complicated form of congenital heart disease dignified by the name of the tetralogy of Fallot. It curbed his physical and nervous energies all his life through. With his strong leaning to folklore, it probably confined his research to the study instead of to the field. His was an exhibition case. He achieved a record of longevity, exceeding by twenty-three years that of any previously recorded case. With that humour which constantly informed his most characteristic work, he deprecated all the fuss that was made on behalf of his health.

So much for the man. But now, some kind of musical background must be found for him. At his disposal there was a large fund of spirituals; material so far but little touched by serious musicians. In that they were the accumulators of the fund, the Fisk Jubilee Singers were creditors of his. Their history, then, requires to be briefly sketched here because it formed part of a very substantial background for men whose ambition it was to make American music. They fall within the fabric of American social relations.

The first function of the Singers was not so much to make music as to amass funds for the sound establishment of the Fisk University for Negroes. Their first organiser and sponsor was a white man, George L. White. He strove to train these wonderful voices to sing operatic, and, of course, sacred music. For it must be remembered that as far as he and many of his compeers were aware, the country had no native music of its own. The University directed itself to the promulgation of Christianity and postulated that the chief value of an educational establishment lay in promoting religious work, though John Ogden, first president, admitted that conversion of the Negroes was the proper door to the kingdom of science as well as to the kingdom of heaven. The last thing that dawned on any of these pioneers was that the native Negro music lying there in their hands was a fecund branch of ethnology.

When the needful money was harvested, when, finally, the singers returned laden with European gold, then the songs were considered ripe for commercial exploitation. Editors of numerous issues "furnished harmonies in accordance with academic rules; which constituted, at least from a scientific standpoint, an advance over the improvised chords of the folk-singer". The words quoted, surprisingly enough, are from the pen of R. Nathaniel Dett, himself a Negro composer. The Fisk University stoutly resisted what it called "tampering" with the Negro music and offered a bitter opposition to the systematic study of music, something of which survives to the present day.

The road to success was a hard one. At first the Negro singers did not give much time to slave songs. They feared that folk of their own colour would

blame them for exposing their former ignorance and weakness. Many freedmen, in fact, regarded the songs as evidence of disgrace. But it was soon proved that Northerners, at least, preferred them to the current *pièce-de-résistance*, the cantata, *Esther*. Yet when the accompanist played, as a show piece, *Annie Laurie* with variations, at the Cincinnati Exposition, the crowd exclaimed, "Do you hear that? And yet she's only a nigger". Nevertheless, it was the spirituals that commanded their true admiration.

The question of respectability was always cropping up. Good Christians, to whom in the main their singing was addressed, could hardly patronize the "burnt-cork minstrels" without losing caste, let alone real blacks. When Henry Ward Beecher's authoritative blessing had been secured for them, the *New York Herald* had a column headed "Beecher's Nigger Minstrels", and under the same title a comic woodcut was run in a humorous paper.

It occasionally happened that when the proprietor of a hotel who had undertaken to provide accommodation for them realized that they were Negroes and not minstrels, he would indignantly refuse them admission. But Beecher's word was that "they will charm any audience; they make their mark by giving the spirituals and plantation songs as only *they* can sing them who know how to keep time to a master's whip". Well, the songs and their singers finally triumphed and the gibes afforded a powerful advertisement.

In official publications of the Fisk Choir's repertory, their music was scrupulously taken down from repeated hearings and not a note was printed without the endorsement of the singers. Their pristine simplicity was conserved and the element of improvisation was retained in performance.

The "burnt-cork minstrels" are quite another thing. In their heyday the Negro was either held up to ridicule or ridiculously sentimentalized. The distinction is that between facetiousness and wit. It is born in superficiality. And the Negro actually aided the process. Although by means of his peculiar unselfconsciousness he powerfully imposed himself, he still did it as a comic, or at least quaint, fellow, devoid of real seriousness. And doubtless his propensity for laughter was an active abettor.

The nigger minstrels sang a great deal of trash. The ragtime cult consisted mainly of caricature of the genuine article. But they were the diversion of the white population; and Mark Twain has assured us that apart from being a Mississippi pilot, the chief ambition of American boyhood was to be a minstrel. Then to all this, Stephen Foster's contribution was one of far-reaching importance. Important because his melodies are his own, while at the same time they vividly portray the social contribution of the Negro to American life. His songs are secular and therefore distinct from the spirituals fostered by the Fisk Singers. For a long time they greatly outweighed the spirituals in popular favour. Few song-composers can boast of an immortality as impressive as Foster's. Few song-composers have wrought so essentially social a music.

It was Coleridge-Taylor who set the final seal of august quality upon Negro music, and who did most to divert the current of the stream into a more sublime course. For in him was seen a Negro composer of international reputation who used African themes in his own works which were actually published;

and whose presence at massed performances of Negro songs, both spiritual and secular, won for them the esteem of academies. For although much, perhaps too much, has been made of Dvořák's interest in native rhythms, his intimation that Negro tunes should form the basis of a national symphony were received with marked disapproval by the elect. From which it would seem that those who claimed to be American composers were still too much under bondage to European academic standards, and to their own class ideas, to accept the Negro as part of the body social and his culture as part of the national asset.

Gilbert delved in all these fields. What he found there he studied thoroughly as an emanation of American social activity, musically almost the only native outcrop. He studied Negro rhythms, incorporating them in melodies of his own invention; he took scraps of Negro tunes and welded them into workable themes; he used entire Negro melodies. The interesting thing is that on one occasion at least, he acknowledges using them as Grieg or Tchaikovsky used their native ores; and Dvořák he does not mention. Dvořák's counsel may have appeared to him to be counsel rather than example. He strove to capture the raciness and even the ordinariness, in some respects, of the burnt-cork idiom as specimens of American music-stuff. And above all, he essayed the expression of the vigour, pathos and jollity of the American scene as Mark Twain or Cable or Chandler Harris did. Serious, humorous, humane men, all of them.

This was carried out without any of the condescension or false delicacy that had marked the approach to a music richer in sentiment than sonority. Quite early Gilbert had considered the possibility of composing an opera based upon the "Uncle Remus" stories. Some difficulties as to the rights of performance arose and the work was abandoned. But not the idea. The music was to have been fashioned from traditional Negro songs and dances as faithfully as the stories were from folklore. We may profitably recall that when Joel Chandler Harris joined the staff of the *Atlanta Constitution*, one of his first jobs was to write Negro sketches with a political twist; a liberal twist, one may suppose, in view of his general outlook. Our delight in "Uncle Remus" is often a youthful one, and we are apt to overlook and then to forget or certainly to underestimate the author's profound studies. The tales, and Harris insisted that they were "uncooked", were told with the greatest care; not one was published till he was certain of the middle-Georgian speech of the old Negro. "He is the only master the century has produced", said Mark Twain. And it is to be noted that their style is still the work of a writer who has closely observed that of the English prose masters: that is, it is a perfect amalgam of both Negro idiom and American technique, as Gilbert's is.

Gilbert salvaged the overture from the wreck of his projected opera and remodelled it. Only one Negro song appears in its entirety. The free and easy opening section has a synthesized tune, worked from two four-measure phrases, quite commonplace things, taken from Charles Edward's book *Bahama Songs and Stories*, published by the American Folklore Society. The only original melody, one which seems to have impressed him deeply, gives a

curious intensity to a work conceived in the comedic spirit. "Unusually wild and romantic in character, and withal of considerable nobility" is the composer's own word about it. The words quoted give no such impression.

It's gwine to Alabammy, Oh. . . .
For to see my Mammy, Oh. . . .

They are reminiscent of hundreds of songs in a vein that is still being worked, but which has lost its real significance, at any rate for European ears. But its rhythm is irregular as the lives of the roustabouts and stevedores who used it as a working-song in the Mississippi steamboats in the old days. In the old days! The song in its original form is to be seen in *Slave Songs of the United States*, so that it genuinely possesses a social significance.

It might seem that a fugue could have no place in an overture of this kind. But Gilbert's knowledge of conditions and actual choice of subjects gives it a psychological claim here. The theme is taken from the spiritual *Old Ship of Zion*, and in the peroration of the fugue scraps of the roustabouts' song make their appearance. This section has intensity and pathos, but back comes the comic element and Gilbert's own words about the coda are quite apt: "the piece ends in an orgy of jollity and ragtime".

When Max Fiedler first introduced the *Negro Overture* to the public in 1911, it was only after considerable hesitation. Not that he had any doubts as to the music. That stood the test of his experience. It was the audience, the public; without which music is still-born. Olin Downes says that some people actually did stop thinking after they had decided that the opening was undignified. Concert audiences are a little apt to bathe in high art's divine effulgence. But for healthy folk the Overture was irresistible. Here was "a new voice, a voice with something to say, and an original way of saying it". Here was "music of American folk tunes that meets every musical test except, perhaps, that of adroit instrumental colouring"; the latter a just comment on the whole.

Ragtime? Yes, ragtime without its sentimental connotations, and without the half-baked ideas of the ignorant concerning syncopation. Gilbert has a strongly marked rhythmic sense, and he naturally makes great play with syncopation in the *Comedy Overture*. Later in his career he attained to a complete mastery of complicated rhythms; but here he does not for a moment forget that the business of such a work is to entertain. The audience is not overwhelmed by a display of technical fireworks. There is, after all, a simple as well as an elemental side to the negro; and the smile of Uncle Remus pervades the Overture.

In his *Humoresque*, Gilbert displays his awareness of the less profound entertainment of the burnt-cork minstrelsy. Song and dance are its subject matter. It *reflects*, as he says, the spirit of comedy, pathos and rollicking mirth of the Old Minstrel Show; and he insists that some of the songs, *Dixie* and *Old Folks at Home*, for instance, form "the nearest approach to true folk-song to be found at present in America". There is a slow section in which the horns

intone a chorus in the authentic character of the excessive sweetness and full-throated sonority which form the European standard of Negro song. And, of course, bells and harp throw in their measure of celestial propriety, while the side drum supplies the appropriate atmosphere of the terrestrial stage.

Altogether graver, altogether more dramatic, is the Negro *Rhapsody*, or "Shout". It is not without significance that Gilbert's early aspirations should have been towards opera, and opera of a peculiar kind at that. Always he sought veracity. This it was that drew him to Paris to hear Charpentier's *Louise*. His innermost convictions told him that seamstresses were more integral a part of the population than the conventional persons of the conventional drama. And for the authentic utterance he turned towards Moussorgsky.

So, in the *Rhapsody*, it is not the spiritual which can be put down in plain notation and reproduced by august choral societies that forms the heart of his music, but an eruption of barbaric extasy which bursts from rapt communion. 'How far back in the communal soul of the Negro the "shout" reaches it is impossible to say. It can only happen during a single "praise" meeting. The ordinary religious service is over. The singing of hymns has done its work in these people. The benches are pushed back. Often the best singers group themselves on one side to "base" the rest. These, young and old, form a group in the middle and gradually begin to shuffle round in a ring, their bare feet performing a jerking, hitching movement, which soon engages the entire body in what is an act of spiritual catharsis. The thud of the feet, the intermittent burst of rhapsodic song can be heard half a mile off. It is primitive. The tepid Christian mythos is engorged.

Gilbert uses a superb "sperichel":

Where do you think I found my soul?
Listen to the angels shouting.
I found my soul at Hell's dark door,
Listen to the angels shouting.

to work up to his climax before proceeding to a lyrical section based on:

You may bury me in the East,
You may bury me in the West;
But I'll hear the trumpet sound
In that morning.

Throughout, of course, an ever-increasing conflict of rhythms tenses the whole conception. It is an insurgence. The conscious artist is expressing a phase of society that absorbs him as deeply as it engages his subconscious. In this work he reaches out towards a world-audience, making them aware of the social problem entailed.

Emphatically this is not to put into the minds of the artist a reforming consciousness. Equally it is not to ossify the music with a political ideology. Yet whatever measure of sympathy has been awakened between author and auditor draws upon their social sensitiveness in proportion.

The *Rhapsody* is a long step forward from the early orchestral pieces entitled *Two Episodes*. There his preoccupation with Negro culture is present. The

melodies are his own, the rhythms only being taken from slave songs. But the feeling is that he regards the rhythms as basic. These slight works were heralded in France as the "first autochthonous American writing". It is amusing to observe that Massenet praised them.

If the *Rhapsody* was a forward step from the *Episodes*, the symphonic tone-poem *Dance in Place Congo* is a long jump. Gilbert's power of expression is enormously increased, and his subtlety in the handling of intricate rhythms is probably at its highest.

The work must have done much to satisfy his craving to write music that could truly be regarded as American. He had often criticized the dependence upon European sources and traditions of much of the work of his contemporaries. They seemed to him "to ignore too completely the very genuine touches of inspiration which exist in *our* history, *our* temperament, and *our* national life".

The picturesque quality of life in New Orleans in the years before the Civil War he found fascinating; and when he chanced upon an article by George W. Cable, in an old number of the *Century Magazine*, he knew he had found his ideal subject. Here we are deep in the disreputable atmosphere freely described in various accounts of the natal era of Jazz, with more than a breath of Voodoo balefulness. Cable, like Gilbert, was a champion of democracy. His extraordinarily moving descriptions of Creole life, his never-ceasing work on behalf of justice for the Negro, made him many enemies. It was said that he always inferred that there was no higher-grade in the coloured population, his sympathy so obviously being with the lower. But from boy to man he had lived with that teeming grade and knew it thoroughly. The criticism levelled against his work was really the familiar middle-class gloss, in which it is pretended that because a higher-grade exists, it is somehow typical and representative of the lump. But Cable still stands.

Cable's article, in this instance, was illustrated and actually quoted fragments of Creole songs and dance-rhythms. Gilbert confesses that he used these musical suggestions after the manner of Tchaikovsky or Grieg—but under the colourful and suggestive literary artistry of Cable—and from these he built his musical structure. It is a rather characteristic understatement. He always refused to be impressed by his own works, even when they were successful. The reference to Tchaikovsky and Grieg is not explicit enough. What he might have said was that when he chose his thematic material he had already saturated himself in the atmosphere evoked by Cable. He did not string out a group of tunes in a style that would have earned the commendation of an examiner, but in the way he heard them in the light of that atmosphere. The harmonies were his and not those of the text-books. The musical creation was his. The approach was essentially personal.

Place Congo was a "no-count open place at the fag-end of Orlean Street, New Orleans. The slaves were given liberty to meet there and enjoy themselves once a week". Their holiday became a tourist spectacle, and one suspects that the thing was not merely allowed but encouraged because it induced forgetfulness in the Negroes.

Already in 1816 "Monk" Lewis had noted that the Negro slaves on his plantation in Jamaica showed as much initiative in the improvisation of instruments as of song. "Their music consisted of nothing but Gambys (Eboe drums), Shaky-shekies, and Kitti-katties: the latter is nothing but a flat piece of board beat upon with two sticks; and the former a bladder with a parcel of pebbles in it." He adds that the principal part of the music to which they dance is vocal. This is the natural misconception of a European who thinks in terms of melody rather than of rhythm. Yet he observes that one girl generally sang two lines by herself, answered by a chorus. This is good for one who was not a musician, a more important observation of his is that one particular song was about the Duke of Wellington; more important, because this fusion of art and social relations is so natural to the Negro musician, nay, the Negro; while his more civilized colleagues in art tend to deprecate and fear the social contribution.

Actually there was no singing. Those who neither danced nor played were active coadjutors; they stamped, clapped and shouted in time. It is the bamboula that forms the vertebra of Gilbert's symphonic poem. The first episode in *Place Congo* sets the stage for the dance. "It is gloomy and elegiac in character. Beginning with certain dark and quasi-barbaric rhythms it gradually grows in intensity until it attains to what may be called the tragic and poignant cry of rage and revolt of an entire race against the restraining bonds of slavery." The episode is developed from a fragment of melody much in use amongst the blacks of Louisiana in the old days and quoted in the original article. Here is Cable's account: "And then there was that long-drawn human cry of tremendous volume, richness and resound, to which no instrument within their reach could make the faintest approach." This tune is well known as *La Belle Layotte* and its rhythms are fairly familiar to twentieth century nerves, mostly through the medium of jazz.

The crude instruments of the Negroes are silent as this cry rises to its zenith; only as it dies away do the savage drums, gourds and rattles crash. This episode, as Gilbert calls it, is used to frame a vulgar, abandoned, bamboula dance. The only bamboula of which the British public can be aware, I think, is the rarely played example by Coleridge-Taylor. Standard works of reference, indeed, are innocent of information about it, a fact which lends probability to its elemental nature. One scrap of melody is common both to Coleridge-Taylor and Gilbert, but that is all. The former's work is a technical exercise alongside the latter's.

After the barbaric spectacle, wrought with terrific force by Gilbert, the composer finds relief in the contemplation of the more idealistic side of the picture, flirtation, love-making, of a less elemental nature. But passions once aroused are not to be stilled till they are sated. We are thrust into the heart of the *melée* again, savage, but swift to repent, until all is broken up by the nine o'clock bell calling the slaves to quarters. We hear their bare pattering feet skittering away to their hovels; we hear fragments of the dance. And then comes the terrible cry of thwarted revolt and the piece ends.

Gilbert did not confine himself to Negro material. He made the same

integral use of Indian themes, though in a much less spectacular manner. These themes do not appear to lend themselves too well to treatment by musicians whose cultured background, after all, is European. Besides, the Indians are a dying race, while the Negroes in America are multiplying. The cultural contribution differs proportionately.

Gilbert's *Indian Scenes* are only obtainable for piano. They first appeared as incidental orchestral music to a lecture on the Indians entitled "A Vanishing Race". The fact exhibits Gilbert the democrat as well as Gilbert the musician. The thematic material is genuine and is treated in the composer's individual manner; that is, he does not apply school harmonies, but those dictated by his own feelings as aroused by careful study not only of the melodies as notes, but as expression.

In the light of this account of his activities the appearance of apparently exotic titles in the list of his works may give us a shock of surprise. What are *Salammbô's Invocation to Sappho*, the symphonic prologue to *Riders to the Sea*, doing amongst such homely neighbours? And are such works as the piano piece after Poe's *Island of the Fay* or *Sixteen Men on a Dead Man's Chest* interlopers there? Not at all. Gilbert has been called the Mark Twain of music. The inference should be carefully considered, remembering well the study of *Joan of Arc*, the aim of *The Prince and the Pauper*, the achievement of *Huckleberry Finn*, as well as the handicap of the *Leaping Frog*.

The seemingly incongruous titles have their place. All are the work of a grandly human, richly typical composer, whose social as well as musical purpose was constantly held in view.

Gilbert integrated people and ideas and things in his music; and that music lives. His position, then, in American music? Although it is generally granted that he is the first *typical* American composer, he is, for the moment, in danger of being relegated to the rear. It so happens that he falls between two groups of musicians: those who for the most part thought along Teutonic lines, MacDowell, Paine, Converse, Chadwick; and those who are more specifically French than American, starting with Loeffler and ending with a considerable band of composers who served apprenticeship under Nadia Boulanger, a band which includes Roger Sessions, Piston, Harris and even Aaron Copland. The work of the first can hardly be regarded as typical of the United States. That of the second shows itself, to some extent, as being raised from the fertile soil that Gilbert husbanded, while its members see themselves as pioneers. Not that this is deliberate; it is merely that Paris has estranged them a little.

Gilbert's studies and predilections associated him with ragtime in the minds of many who consider music as an entity without roots in society. And the new and growing cult of swing not only made ragtime, and jazz in the broadest sense of the term, seem somewhat antediluvian, but composers like Copland were swift to avail themselves of swing in their more sophisticated art.

For all this, a true perspective will not allow Gilbert to be overlooked or long neglected. In 1927, *Place Congo* stood for American music at the International Festival at Frankfort, sharing the honours with a work by Copland.

Gilbert performed a great service. Christopher Caudwell* has observed that mythology, with its ritual and art with its performances, have similar functions—"the adaptation of man's emotions to the necessity of social co-operation. Both embody a confused *perception* of society, but an accurate *feeling* for society".

Gilbert would have endorsed that observation. The things that he knew he felt deeply. His recognition of a Negro culture, his expression of this in a broader form, his musical subscription to the American statement of Twain, Harris and Cable, touch our universal emotions and awaken *our* feeling for society. His purely musical achievement is a fine one.

Concerts

Pre-War Standards

BEECHAM AT THE ALBERT HALL

A LARGE audience assembled to welcome the return of Sir Thomas Beecham on 7th October on the occasion of his first appearance in London since April, 1940. In view of the lamentable standard of performance which has been established and accepted as "normal for war-time" (with the exception of the Hallé Orchestra under Barbirolli's leadership), Beecham's dynamic, vivid and hard-driven *Carnaval Romain* seemed to match that other famous performance—the first he ever gave with the London Philharmonic Orchestra in 1932. Here were no spiritless truckling to war-time difficulties, no toleration of idleness, no half measures of any kind. For the first time at any concert I have attended since Beecham left, this orchestra showed that it *can* still maintain uniform bowing through an entire programme, that it *can* still produce a genuine *pianissimo*, that as a body it *can* listen to the overall effect of its performance and maintain (for the most part) clean and true intonation. If there has ever been proof that the conductor makes the orchestra, this was it. Here was the most vigorous *Carnaval Romain* I have heard and one which the spirit of Berlioz must surely have approved. *Brigg Fair*, which followed the overture, was less successful: one of Delius' more wayward essays, it needs even more *finesse* and greater beauty of tone to cast its magic spell to perfection. Of the Mozart C major Symphony (K. 338) we were given a performance which I have heard equalled only by the pre-war Beecham-L.P.O. partnership; the precision, verve and sparkle of the first and last movements together with the clean phrasing and delicate shading of the *Andante* proved conclusively, if we still needed proof, that advancing years cannot wither nor travel shake the genius of Sir Thomas Beecham.

After the interval came a highly pointed reading of Sibelius' least successful symphony, the Sixth in D minor. There were many individual beauties in this "impressionist" interpretation of a work which always seems reluctant to reveal its full import: so much so that I have yet to hear any conductor make the sequence of movements sound inevitable. Finally, Chabrier's *España* created such a stir that Sir Thomas was faced with the alternative of making a speech or giving an *encore*, and for the first time (I think) since he repeated the *Death of Mélisande* at the Sibelius Festival, he chose the latter course. Some finely shaded string playing in the slow movement of Elgar's *Severnade* (Op. 20) sent the audience away happy.

* *Illusion and Reality*. London, 1937.

Bartók's Violin Concerto

On 20th September I had the privilege of attending the first English performance of Béla Bartók's six-year-old Violin Concerto, given by Yehudi Menuhin and the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra conducted by Sir Adrian Boult.

The result was not altogether convincing; for which it seemed that the manner of performance was responsible, rather than the nature of the composer's material. It was odd, to say the least, that the "playing time" ran to forty minutes despite Bartók's indication—*Durée totale ca. 32'*: indeed, compared with the composer's figures, the first movement overran by four minutes and the last by four-and-a-half: from which the astute mathematician may deduce that the slow movement ran thirty seconds fast. Of course, half-a-minute is of little real importance either way, but from the above evidence the perceptive student of broadcast music might infer that the B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra was indulging in its recent predilection for *mezzo-forte*: *Allegro moderato* as its standard dynamic, volumetric and velocitous lynch-pin. He would be right.

This ponderous and comparatively inflexible gait had previously upset the subtleties of Bach's string writing in the E major Concerto: and as for Mozart's "little" C major Symphony (K.200), fifteen strings (4 : 4 : 3 : 2 : 2) would have been ample; while a maximum of twenty would have enabled Menuhin to employ his beautiful *cantabile* style to better effect in the Bach.

To revert to the Bartók: I was told that fourteen hours had been spent on it in rehearsal and the result certainly showed signs of *conscientious* preparation, but the idiom of the work is strange at times despite its firm B and G tonality, and Sir Adrian did not seem to have the key to the workings of the composer's volatile and kaleidoscopic "tonal" imagination—I am using the word "tonal" here in its qualitative rather than its definitive sense. (As an example of Bartók's unconventional orchestration: who would have guessed from the piano-score that the opening chords of the work were allotted to the harp? And yet the result is both characteristic and apposite.) Beecham found similar difficulties some years ago in the *Music for Strings, Percussion and Celesta*.

Bartók's music can be made to sound spontaneous without any emaciation of its stark rhythmic angularities, as Lili Kraus has shown in the case of the piano works; just to be choleric and explosive (as this performance was in the more vigorous passages) is not enough. When we are given a fully integrated performance at the correct speed, I am sure we shall find this Concerto taking its place with the Bloch (which in style and character it strangely resembles) and the Sibelius among the masterpieces of twentieth century music.

Meanwhile we must be grateful for this pioneering experiment on the part of the B.B.C.: it was a salutary antidote to the present surfeit of utility performances of Beethoven and Tchaikovsky, and has established a precedent which we hope the music department will be encouraged to follow up.

[An analytical article dealing with this Concerto, written by Julian Herbage, will be published in this journal early next year.]

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Since the above was written, on 8th October, the B.B.C. broadcast a repeat performance of the Bartók Concerto with the same artists. Three minutes faster than on 20th September, it had still five to make up to compare with Székely's reading at Amsterdam in April, 1939: and I am convinced that the first and last movements would create a more scintillating effect if still further accelerated in *tempo*. After two hearings I may perhaps risk the suggestion that the first movement is among the most important we have for violin and orchestra, and that the finale, taken at its correct speed, would prove a worthy companion. It is unfortunate that the variations which form the slow movement are so unequal in musical value.

G. N. S.

Henry Wood: 1869-1944

BY

GEOFFREY SHARP

EIGHT years ago, in a humorous monologue on confusion in christian names, one of Sir Henry's most illustrious and brilliant confrères referred to "my pungent and picturesque colleague whose name is Henry". Wood was pungent; and his beard and carnation were picturesque decorations which could not, however, conceal the uncompromising nature of the finest native drill-sergeant British orchestral musicians ever had. It is unfair to say that whatever first-class orchestral playing exists in this country to-day is due to Sir Henry's training, partly because there is so very little; but without him the position would have been far worse.

"Silence, I will 'ave silence." Thus the stentorian voice, commanding attention (as one has to do with British orchestras), silencing musicians' gossip and banishing the timpanist's patience cards (or race card) for the urgency of the music in hand. The drill-sergeant mellowed, as we all do, and became affectionately known as "Timber", but his standard of efficiency seldom varied and he has been the most consistently sound of British conductors over a period of fifty years.

Soundness and efficiency may sound prosaic as the attributes of a conductor, particularly in these days when brilliance and showmanship are cultivated often at the expense of musicianship: but such were the keystones of Sir Henry's career. On no other basis could the "Proms" have been run, a fifty-year series of concerts which formed the foundation of his achievement and by far the most important phase of his work.

Wood made the "Proms". No higher tribute can be paid. Fifteen years ago I first heard the *Eroica* at these concerts: then, only a fortnight before he died, I heard him conduct *Ah, perfido* (with Joan Hammond), the Mozart A major Concerto K488 (with Maurice Cole) and the Beethoven Seventh Symphony, all in performances which I am convinced he would like to be remembered. They will be.

Wood was not a specialist. Although it seemed that he was most at home with the music of the nineteenth century, there was no work which he would not tackle if he thought it worth while and capable of interesting his audience. But the man who ran the "Proms" had to be of practical bent and frivolous suggestions were turned down with "Empty the 'ouse, me boy".

Because Sir Henry's Haydn and Mozart were dull and unimaginative, because he once gave a half-prepared performance of the Mahler Eighth through no fault of his own, it has been said that Wood was no artist. Such blind stupidity would not be worth refuting except that it had some vogue and drew support from people who should have known better; though to claim that he was the world's greatest conductor would be the height of chauvinism.

I have never heard Sir Henry "inspired", in the sense that Barbirolli, Beecham, Furtwängler and Walter give occasional performances which are not "of this earth". But he had the unique compensation of absolute reliability, and it takes more than inspiration to make a conductor.

People like myself who learned nearly all their music originally from the "Proms" (pace the R.C.M.) owe Sir Henry a debt which can never be paid. A sound knowledge of a representative body of the classics should be (but isn't) a part of every musician's heritage: one sphere in which the habitual "Prom" goer has the advantage.

For years "Prom" audiences have been indiscriminate in their applause. That is in part the measure of Wood's achievement: he gave people music they could not get anywhere else at the price, for which they were duly appreciative. What he did not give was this mysterious quality of inspiration which might have made his audiences more critical.

Book Reviews

Wagner and His First Elizabeth. By Hans Jachmann. Pp. viii + 64, illustrated. (Novello.) First German edition published 1926. This edition, 1944. 7s. 6d.

This small biography of Johanna Wagner, written by her son and translated into English by her daughter, Maria Trechman, will make fascinating reading for anyone interested in singing, in Wagner, and in nineteenth-century German operatic life in general. Johanna was Richard Wagner's niece, and one of the most successful singers of her day. She spent several years as *prima donna* next to the famous Mme. Schroeder-Devrient at the Dresden Opera House under her uncle's conductorship. Johanna sang the part of Elizabeth in the first performance of *Tannhäuser* in 1845, and she was connected with several other Wagner *premieres*. After 1849, however, Johanna's life proceeded independently of that of the great man.

There are many interesting stories, and we get amusing new sidelights on Wagner's own personality and career. It is perhaps understandable if Wagner's personal character should appear somewhat idealized in a document which has been prepared by members of his own family. Another point will puzzle the reader: Johanna tells us that *Tannhäuser* was "received with enthusiasm" by the public at the first performance in Dresden. It is generally agreed that the public failed to understand the work, and that this show was indeed a defeat for Wagner.

The book has a preface by John Mewburn Levien who adds some good points of his own to the author's account of Johanna's stay in this country. E. H. M.

The Interpretation of the Music of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries. By Arnold Dolmetsch. (Handbooks for Musicians edited by Ernest Newman.) Pp. x + 493. (Novello and O.U.P.) 1944. 15s.

Dolmetsch's masterly study on the interpretation of the musical notation of seventeenth and early eighteenth-century music was first published in 1915. Glancing at the re-issue we realize how revolutionary its reading must have been to the average musician thirty years ago. In those days most of the great pianists made their own "editions" of old music without investigating thoroughly what the old masters themselves said in their prefaces or in theoretical treatises about the performance of their music. Dolmetsch went back to the sources. He collected all the material and laid it out before us. He warns the student not to approach the old masters biased by his own ideas about the right way of performing them. The student, he says, "should first try and prepare his mind by thoroughly understanding what the old masters *felt* about their own music, what impressions they wished to convey, and generally, what was the *Spirit of their Art*". In order to fulfil his task Dolmetsch quotes extensively the statements both of composers and theoreticians about expression, *tempo*, rhythm and ornamentation of their music, finishing with a survey of the musical instruments of the period. The largest part of the book is dedicated to a minute study of the difficult problem of ornamentation, illustrated by a great number of music-examples, and most valuable extracts from contemporary authors. We only regret to find that Dolmetsch omits the historical development of ornamentation: nor does he separate the Italian school from the Spanish, French, English and German. With the help of the indices, however, the reader will easily find his way through the amazingly great variety of signs and their execution.

There is at present a great revival of pre-classical music. All those who attempt to perform a work of that period should bear in mind the words of Ph. E. Bach: "In proportion to their usefulness and beauty when properly applied (the ornaments) can do harm when they are wrongly employed, or their application is not well controlled." E. J. W.

Art and Scientific Thought. By Martin Johnson. Pp. viii + 192, illustrated. (Faber.) 1944. 16s.

Dr. Martin Johnson has performed a considerable service in giving us this thoughtful and thought-provoking book. It is described on its title-page as consisting of historical studies towards a modern revision of the antagonism between art and scientific thought. These exact words are important, and not least that "towards". The history of human thought about nature, which emerges from the study of the history of science, and about art, which is discussed in different aspects in this book, is a study essential to any clear apprehension of the problem of which Dr. Johnson offers us a tentative solution. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he offers us signposts pointing in directions along which solution may be sought. Observe, too, that Dr. Johnson describes his solution as concerned, not with scientific knowledge or scientific method, but with something lying far deeper, scientific thought. He brings us up sharply against the realization that our thought-processes are constantly hampered by traditional conceptions.

Perhaps the best summary of the task Dr. Johnson has set himself is given in his concluding pages:

"A tangle of incompatibilities is . . . inherited from the traditional antagonisms between our logical and aesthetic reaction to experience. Throughout the foregoing groups of essays there has frequently recurred the suggestion that some of these antagonisms might become understandable and even might become reconciled: the ground for such synthesis is to regard science and art as each a mode of communication of mental imagery by pattern or structure in some selected medium. But the suggestion will only be of service . . . if there is also recognized the danger of misreading the limits of association between science and art."

And a page later:

"One sharp distinction was drawn between the communications of scientific and imaginative pattern: it was decided that a single work of art must invoke different images in different minds, whereas a scientific theory finds its validity in the identity or the correlation between calculations or experiments carried out by its means under all possible varieties of circumstances. But it was noticed that many of the most fruitful concepts of science are as remote from direct sense experience as those of the most fantastic art; their legitimacy in each case lies in the power to evoke coherent mental imagery."

And he adds:

"The correlation (of science, art, religion, and philosophy) will have been achieved when [amongst other things] we recognize the universal tendency of the human mind to symbolize its experiences."

The reader of Dr. Johnson's studies will quickly find himself under the necessity of penetrating to the thought behind the words. The meaning of "pattern" illustrates this necessity. Bach's music is described as "instructive in its almost total dependence upon pattern". This may be compared with the author's study of pattern of a different kind in Beethoven's last string quartets. To say that here, as elsewhere, Dr. Johnson demands the co-operation of the reader, is no criticism; for Francis Bacon's "Idols of the Market" may be as great a bar, to-day, to clear understanding and the correction of confused thinking as they were when he wrote *Novum Organum*.

Those readers who have delighted in Tovey's book, *The Integrity of Music*, will recall that he begins by describing the integrity of art as implying an essential difference between art and science, which he proceeds to develop in some detail. Recalling Tovey as a great musical scholar, and observing Dr. Johnson as a distinguished physicist, have we here an example of the different approach of the artist and the man of science? I think not, for Tovey is concerned with the scientific method, with what we may call, in this context, the technique of science. Whether Tovey was skilled in the laboratory arts, or not, is beside the point. The material thing is that, like Francis Bacon, he attained to the scientific mentality. Dr. Johnson, as a man of science seized with the significance of modern advances in physics, in its exploration of the extremely small and the extremely large, shows himself in these pages as possessing in an unusual measure a sensitiveness to imaginative work in a wide range of arts. Tovey was concerned, in the main, to brush aside the "pseudo-scientific speculations" which have made such impertinent intrusions

into musical theory. Dr. Johnson is equally scathing in his references to the "toxic effect of pseudo-scientific convention upon art". And he tell us that "pseudo-science is worse than no science at all". But he has undertaken the much more difficult task of replacing these misconceptions by something constructive. For that we owe him thanks.

The range of knowledge to be laid under contribution in this task might well have daunted an author with less grasp of essentials. In warning his readers not to become tangled in the perplexities of metaphysics Dr. Johnson writes:

"If any academic label of study were unfortunately to be attached to the present enquiries, I would claim to be discussing not the philosophy of science and art so much as their psychology."

This claim is established by his excursion into fields of art which cover Beethoven's final music for string quartet, Chinese jade carvings, the Gothic sculpture of Chartres, a Russian ballet, and Walter de la Mare's poetry. Perhaps the most fascinating chapters are those in Parts III and IV which, respectively, deal with "historical failures to maintain a balance between the scientific and the imaginative", and offer a new approach to the study of the "enigmatic" figure of Leonardo da Vinci.

It is evident from his pages that Dr. Johnson will have achieved his purpose if he makes us think for ourselves. It is because he demands this response to his studies that they are of such compelling interest. To understand his thesis we must follow in his own footsteps, as described by him in his Preface, and learn with the man of science to query all our traditional assumptions. That is the very essence of the scientific method, which in the seventeenth century brought to trial, by experimental confirmation or refutation, all traditional conceptions about nature deriving from medieval times.

Dr. Johnson has performed a further, and incidental, service by this book. Its study will build up in the mind of the non-scientific reader some conception of the essential nature of the scientific thought of the physicist. The reader whose idea of science is that of a tidy compendium of knowledge about nature capable of final presentation in textbook fashion will find the corrective if he accompanies Dr. Johnson to the growing edge of scientific knowledge. He will begin to appreciate the full significance of Professor Whitehead's description in *Science and the Modern World* of the exciting state of "muddled suspense" which precedes great advances in scientific research such as Dr. Johnson tells us about. For these reasons reflection as well as careful reading is called for by this most interesting and instructive adventure into little-explored territory. L. S. L.

MORE SADLER'S WELLS LIBRETTI

La Traviata. By Verdi. English Version by Edward J. Dent. (O.U.P.) 2s. 6d.

Fra Diavolo. By Auber. English Version by Edward J. Dent. (O.U.P.) 2s. 6d.

Many people of some education have attended performances of *La Traviata* without knowing what the title meant, even if they were aware of its relation to the *Dame aux Camélias*; and, if they knew the latter, like myself, they must have been puzzled by the changed names of the characters. Professor Dent's introduction puts the history of this curiously modern opera, without which a work so apparently dissimilar as *Louise* would never have been written, in the clearest possible light, as "a drama depending on realism, but realism of the most difficult and intimate kind". The version that follows this elucidation is a most ingenious *tour de force*, because along with the air of casualness it preserves the poetry and the aroma. It can only be compared to some of the lighter stage work of Dryden; indeed, in the course of *Libiamo ne' lieto calici* a hint of "Farewell, ungrateful traitor" is, possibly entirely by accident, obtained:

MARG. For love we have no leisure—

ARM. Till one heart you can treasure.

MARG. My own has yet to measure—

ARM. The depths of joy and pain.

I have never forgiven Professor Dent in *Fidelio* for rendering Leonora's famous "Todt erst sein Weib" as "I am his wife" (introducing Mrs. Florestan, as it were); here he has made considerable amends.

The libretto of *Fra Diavolo* is by Scribe, based on a tale by Washington Irving. Here the translator's business, modifying the character of Lord Allcash, since he obviously can't talk bad French, has been to maintain the requisite lightness; and this, in spite of some loose rhyming here and there, he has done. In the course of this experiment at least one perfect stanza has been struck out:

"Sheets are damp and floors are stony;
No one's ever heard of tea!
Can you live on macaroni?
Well, it's not the food for me."

That is much nearer Praed than Gilbert.

E. H. W. M.

Queen's Hall (1893-1941). By Robert Elkin: with a Foreword by Dr. Malcolm Sargent. Pp. 160, illustrated. (Rider & Co.) 1944. 21s.

Social historians who browse on diaries and letters become really excited when they can lay their hands on accounts of housekeeping and business transactions of a past age. Here, in a book which is devastatingly full of facts, one misses that most vital item, which would be of more than gossip interest—the accounts of Queen's Hall concerts. They would, as my nurse used to say, learn us! To anyone who has travelled his England, there is considerable enjoyment of reminiscence to be got out of a Bradshaw, though it needs some imagination to make it a happy bedside book. And to those of us who knew Queen's Hall well Mr. Elkin's parade of information and dates offers musical material for thought, or rather historical material for musical thought. But there is little of the colour of the old or the re-painted Hall, little of the glitter of the lights on the brass instruments and the ladies' dresses, little of the atmosphere of purposefulness and bustle which always enveloped the entering audience as if with an aureate cloud. Mr. Elkin indulges in no romance, and his publishers have done their best to make his factual record look as drab as they could—even in war time: though it should be recorded that they are giving the profits to the Sir Henry Wood Jubilee Fund.

It would be fun to review this book at length, but unfortunately that would entail writing a supplementary volume, with constant references not only to this text, but also to Howes' *Full Orchestra*, Russell's *Philharmonic*, and Shore's *The Orchestra Speaks*. That not being the reviewer's job, it is best to note down briefly one or two points that struck the signatory as he conjured up scenes of enjoyment out of this somewhat mundane Aladdin's lamp. Arrangements of facts must show some bias, and Mr. Elkin is to be congratulated for showing so little. I fancy that Brahms' growing popularity in England from 1890 onwards, as well as Wagner's, owed a good deal to Queen's Hall. And, as a more general point, there is, it seems to me but it cannot be proved, a rather serious neglect of Sir Henry Wood's association with the Hall: he was the genius of it, and to quote one example, there is not enough about his refusal to tolerate the deputy system which had such long-lasting results. I was glad to see honour done to Dr. Cathcart for his initial financing of the Proms. But too much space in the Henry Wood chapter is surely given to the Diogenes verses, in themselves not of great distinction (post-Browning rather than of the Praed elegance), and we could have borne some more about Wood and his work in their place. There are some entertaining facts that throw out a glint every few pages, from the plans of the stables of Haynes and Marks to the variety concerts and the various other non-musical activities in what must have been the most frequently used place of entertainment in London. Sly touches of a rather boyish humour too enliven the annals, with a rather odd array of pictures scattered about the book. Dr. Sargent's foreword does not add as much glamour to the book as his conducting usually does to the music; in fact, it is curiously out of step in its prose and outlook with the author's literal style. This is a useful volume which writers on music and, indeed, all musicians when they "are old and grey and full of sleep and nodding by the fire" will "take down and slowly read", for information and for reviving their memories of concerts long gone. But it must be confessed that it has not the sparkle of *The Canterbury Tales*, even factually.

Encomium Musices. (No. 6 of the Harrow Replicas.) With a note by Otto Erich Deutsch. (Heffer.) 30s.

This collection of eighteen collotypes of engravings from about 1590, printed by the Chiswick Press on a delightful Italian laid paper in the odd size of Imperial 8vo (oblong), is an astonishing production for war time, and produces a charming sensation of ease and an older comfort in its possessor. The originals came from Antwerp, both music and engravings: in the latter, several hands were at work: all those concerned were Roman Catholic Flemings. The rarity of the book is recorded by Professor Deutsch, five copies only being known, only one besides the copy from which this was photographed being in England. It is a curious omission from the otherwise detailed note that we are not told the size of the original engravings, though clearly they must have been much larger than the reproductions. One page is set in letterpress in a charming fount that has close kinship with the designs of Plantin. The title-page is a rich formal design of figures and musical instruments with a six-part song by Andreas Pevernage as its central piece—a very early specimen of engraved music. The sixteen other engravings show scenes from Biblical history, eleven from the Old Testament, two from the Apocrypha, and three from the New Testament. The engravings are of a quite incredible beauty, massed with detail exquisitely achieved and yet of a spaciousness that leads beyond the architectural horizon into the landscape behind. For one, at least, of their admirers, these artists find a higher spiritual beauty in their more worldly designs, those that attempt a celestial symbolism losing some of the directness of method which is elsewhere so successful. The collotypes vary a little in inking, and so in quality, but with so delicate a process, one's wonder is that it can at this moment be achieved at all. The result is unquestionably a very beautiful book.

H. J. F.

Reviews of Music

Johann Sebastian Bach. *Musical Offering*, edited by Hans T. David. (G. Schirmer, New York.) 18s.

Until a decade or two ago this work was bracketed with the *Art of Fugue* as an example of abstract ingenuity somewhat divorced from the practical issues of music-making. As orchestration and discreet chamber-music arrangements have done much to bring the latter work into the catalogue of "performed" works, so this new and practical edition will, it is hoped, do a similar service for the neglected *Musical Offering*. Far from being a somewhat haphazard series of occasional pieces, the work is now seen to follow a comprehensive plan: thus:—*Ricercar à 3* (Three-part fugue) followed by five canons of varying types: *Trio Sonata* (four movements): Five canonic elaborations and a final *Ricercar à 6* (Six-part fugue). But the "practical reasons" causing this original plan to be disregarded by the engraver of the first edition are unfortunately left to the reader to work out for himself. Seen thus as a comprehensive work of a well-defined formal design, it becomes even more monumental. In many ways its more recondite movements surpass in contrapuntal ingenuity similar movements in the *Art of Fugue*, at the same time miraculously preserving an air of easy spontaneity that makes them essentially music and not merely mathematical exercises. Has it ever occurred to critics how similar are the harmonic hints (and, to the initiated, the contrapuntal ones) thrown out by both the "Royal" theme and the one, presumably Bach's own, used as the basis for the *Art of*

Fugue? Take two forms of the latter and compare them with the *Musical Offering* theme:—



Did the composer prompt the "royal" pen to produce a theme that "worked," or did the findings from working at a chance theme produce a loose formula that shaped the *Art of Fugue* theme? Interesting and fruitful speculations for those with the time and inclination to delve into them. They take more point too from the fact that the explicit chromaticism of the later work grows into the structure instead of being openly offered.

As well as being an authentic edition, Mr. David has been at pains to make it as practical as possible by cautiously adding indications of *tempo*, dynamics and phrasing. The scoring uses woodwind, strings and keyboard (piano or harpsichord) in varying combinations.

E. R.

[Readers may find it useful and informative to consult an article entitled "Bach's *Musical Offering*", also by Hans T. David, in *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, July, 1937—(Ed.).]

Lennox Berkeley. *String Trio*. Miniature score. (Chester.) 3s. 6d.

This is a beautifully written little work: well constructed and well scored for that rather tricky combination, the string-quartet-minus-a-second-fiddle. Like everything else Mr. Berkeley writes, the thing has style. This first movement might serve as a textbook example of the modern handling of sonata form, with the intellectual centre of gravity placed not in the development (where the academic dud delights to cerebrate) but in the recapitulation (where Mr. Berkeley does not cerebrate, but enriches his texture and weaves it tighter as Bach does in the climax of a fugue).

The central movement—there is no scherzo—is an *adagio* with a cool beauty that suggests an affinity, nothing more, with the slow movement of Britten's String Quartet. And the finale, the least satisfactory of the three movements both thematically and in workmanship, is in some respects the parallel of the equivalent movement in the same Britten work, though the parallel is too distant for any question of "influence" to arise. The material of the Trio as a whole is on the slight side, but that matters less in a composition of these relatively modest dimensions than in the same composer's Symphony. A more serious objection is that the themes are insufficiently memorable; memorability is not the hall-mark of a good theme—how many bad themes one tries in vain to forget!—but it is one of the marks of a great one. The pregnant, clinching qualities that make themes memorable are all this Trio needs to convert it from good music into something approaching great music.

G. A.

Aaron Copland. *Sonata*. (Boosey & Hawkes.) 7s. 6d.

Granados. *The Lover and The Nightingale*. Arr. Ethel Bartlett and Rae Robertson. (Chester.) 9s. 4d.

The pianoforte has been sufficiently neglected by contemporary composers (except in Concerto) for any full-scale work in the medium by an artist of reputation to be welcome; and Copland's *Sonata* is particularly interesting, though less for its artistic merit than for the revelation it gives of the craftsman's mind at work. The composer is not concerned with problems of instrumental technique. What he has to say he says uncompromisingly with little consideration for the pianist's feelings or fingers, and it often

seems that he is thinking rather in terms of the orchestra than of the keyboard. For the technical problem which preoccupies him is not one of pianism but of form: how, set adrift from the tonal anchor, and eschewing development (there is extension and embroidery but no development in the Classical sense), to achieve unity; how, within the limitations of this style, to make each movement an entity and each, at the same time an organic part of the whole. The result is only partially successful: the devices include the statement of a motto theme in the first movement, which reappears in the finale, and the throwing out of an idea in the second movement which becomes a wistful *recitative* in the introductory section of the finale; but the true unity, which has much to do with technique yet in the masterpiece seems independent of it, is lacking. The absence is crucial. Technique obtrudes itself so that one misses the message. The bones are so clearly visible beneath the flesh that one's attention is fixed upon them, and one can neither admire the body as a whole nor its individual features.

The first movement comes nearest to success. The motto theme which opens the work contains the unifying factor, of all things a succession of false relations in descending chords; and when later the motto is transformed into a long restless cantilena, this basic idea becomes a system which dominates the flavour of the section. The result is nearly indigestion; but a brisk middle section fulfils the function of musical bicarbonate of soda, and one is prepared for a return of the introductory section now expanded to heroic proportions. The movement, as a whole, is satisfying; for the complete contrast of the middle section arrests the flow of the false relation sequence before it becomes an obsession.

But the promise of the openings of both the second and last movements is disappointed. The main subject of the second movement is a delightfully feathery theme delicately harmonised which runs its airy course and comes to a full stop. A "Morceau", one would say, of the best unpretentious type. But this is a sonata; and so the little theme has to be transformed into a jarring "Ding, Dong Bell" (followed by organized howling at the well by all the other pussies); it is submitted to counterpoint, banged out in the bass against Stravinsky chords and rhythms, and even treated in strict canon for two harrowing recurrent bars. This tells us nothing new about the subject, except what can be done if one is sufficiently perverse; its purpose is simply to set off the returns of the unpolluted theme. But no subtleties of combination nor hiccoughs of rhythm can disguise the fact that the idea was exhausted a third of the way through, and everything that follows only exhausts the hearer. It is the same with the finale: there are patches of beauty and depth, but the movement is not the synthesis and metamorphosis of the whole which it attempts to be. An introduction of pathos and force is soon left—never to be heard again, whilst, with occasional glimpses of the motto, the composer leads us home by playing extraordinarily unvaried tricks with a dull new tune. If, therefore, the Sonata is exceptionally interesting as a study of the process of composition, it is for that reason disappointing aesthetically. Since technique has often to intervene where invention fails, the work is illuminating to the student but irritating to the musician.

The Granados is a complete contrast. It is a good arrangement of the best of the pieces from *Goyescas*, with the lover getting the best of the bargain, but with some real trills for the nightingale. In this two-piano arrangement there is some slight filling out of the harmony and alteration of the spacing where necessary, but substantially it is unchanged from the original solo.

N. G. L.

John Church. *Divine Hymn*. Edited by Edward J. Dent for the Oxford University Press. 2s. 6d.

Here is early eighteenth-century English music at its best, still maintaining the great English tradition of vocal writing while cautiously using the best and most advanced of foreign elements. There are traces of Locke and Purcell, together with influences of the contemporary German and Italian "baroque". This remarkable "song scena" has been edited with skill and profound historical understanding.

G. F. Handel. *Sonata in A, Op. 1, No. 15* (originally Sonata in E for violin and figured bass). (O.U.P.) 3s. 6d.

Handel's famous sonata, transcribed for viola by Watson Forbes and Alan Richardson, is an important addition to the now growing repertoire of classical music for the viola player. It is competently edited, if slightly overdone in the accompaniment of the first movement; the bass part especially is sometimes too massive. E. H. M.

Gerald Finzi. *Introit* for small orchestra and solo violin. (O.U.P.) 5s.

This is a very moving movement, marked *molto sereno*, in which the soaring possibilities of the violin between close-woven orchestral sections are exploited with delicacy and fragrance. The lesson of the slow movement of Beethoven's A minor quartet has been learnt, but there is no contrast of the *sentendo nuova forza* order, nothing to disturb the cloud of incense rising before the shrine. Mr. Finzi has achieved that very rare thing, a real musical meditation. A passage in which the solo instrument is accompanied only by flute and double basses is particularly entrancing.

Robin Milford. *A Mass* for children's voices with soprano and baritone soloists and organ accompaniment. (O.U.P.) 3s.

A prefatory note, suggesting the addition of a few women altos to the 2nd trebles in the more emotional passages, gives perhaps the clue to a work which, considered as a Mass, is certainly as good as a miss. It is a service in six movements, in each of which a Congregational hymn is included, the movements, in every case but the first, an *Asperges*, preceding the hymn. "The Nicene Creed" starts *leggero e poco giocoso* in $\frac{2}{4}$ time, and the prevailing mood, particularly in the "Come ye, buy, and eat" section of the *Sacrum Convivium*, is a sort of evangelical "Goblin Market" on endless folksong lines. This is not to say that Mr. Milford's domestic rite will not have an appeal and even a strong allure for devotional eclectics and sophisticates, resembling as it does the "Children's Corner" in many a church which passes muster to-day as one of Christ. Humanity Parade, if you like, but Mass, no!

Henry G. Ley. *Te Deum* and *Jubilate* in C minor for A.T.B.B. or T.T.B.B. (O.U.P.) 10d.

The *Te Deum* is more effective than the *Jubilate*, for, keys being what they are, it is practically impossible to suggest *rejoicing* in C minor. With this caveat no. 508 of *Oxford Church Music* may be recommended. Dr. Ley probably has his reasons for setting the "and" in "Cherubin and Seraphin" to a minim; it is the only hole that can be picked in a virile straightforward number.

Charles F. Waters. *Creator Spirit*. (O.U.P.) 5d.

This Whitsuntide or general anthem for sopranos and organ on Dryden's words is a calm, equable piece with little modulation, and aptly described as one of a series of easy anthems.

William Boyce. *By thy bank, gentle Stour*, with piano accompaniment by Elizabeth Poston. (O.U.P.) 2s.

If you like your eighteenth-century vocal furniture with an Elgarian varnish, this is for your house of song—it is quite unexceptionable, spread chords and all; but some would prefer it *au naturel*, with a figured bass. E. H. W. M.

A Child of our Time. Oratorio. Words and music by Michael Tippett. Vocal score. (Schott.) [No price given.]

I approach this printed copy with a considerable measure of awe, not indeed without good reasons. For before its first performance the trumpets and drums of publicity put up a considerable sennet or tucket heralding this as an important work and telling us about its immediate relation to current events, Jewish massacres, and so on. Immediately

after we were treated by a number of critics to diatribes on "The Modern Oratorio", as I feel sure was intended. Further, we have been told in the Press with remarkable frequency this last couple of years that the future of British music is *aut Tippett-Britten aut nihil*. Again, I feel as I turn the pages that I am dealing with a work closely associated with sociological questions, which apart from being outside my range are unsuitable for treatment by even an authority in the columns of a musical quarterly.

This last reason is the most awe-inspiring of all, for there is conveyed to me by these pages a curious social sense, that I *ought* to listen to the work because I *ought* to be in revolt against a social order which causes suffering, etc.—and here I am doing the very thing I am endeavouring to avoid: talking politics, or in other words, allowing myself to judge a work of art on anything but its artistic merits and achievement. It is almost impossible to avoid it with this work, even before one has lifted the prison-grey paper cover. The title is *A Child of our Time*. I can recall no great masterpiece with a similar documentary insistence on the importance of its self in relation to the moment of its creation. Horace had some advice on this point, and Wordsworth too. Hogarth did not give the dates of his Rake (not that Mr. Tippett's methods are in the least Hogarthian). Mozart's satire is not wholly *démodé* to-day. *The Creation* we may well believe happened in a less eighteenth-century manner than Haydn's music suggests, but at least Haydn had the broad conception of *Genesis* before him. And did not Bach sing "Gottes Zeit ist die allerbesten Zeit"? The attitude of the composer-librettist here seems to me a little self-conscious and presumptuous. He is inviting us, not to be purged by a great general tragedy of mankind, not to have life's horrors sublimated by art into a great masterpiece, not to be allured by beauty of word and tone into the contemplation of human suffering, but as it were to a ceremony, a parade of facts, a documentary film of the persecution of an under-dog whom (one feels) he almost knew personally, and who is therefore the more cutting symbol of modern social evils. There is more than a touch of the *Parsifal*-complex about this music, and with it the crusading and journalistic ardour of an Upton Sinclair. Personally, I place a higher artistic value on the realism of Flaubert than on that of Zola: for me the little boy lost of Blake is an infinitely more real and more pitiful figure than the ill-treated little chimney-sweep. Tradition firmly recounts that the choirboys' conditions of service in Bach's time were anything but comfortable and that floggings were frequent: such injustices were, no doubt, incorporated, along with other ills that flesh is heir to, in Bach's music, but only as a general part of the unjust and wicked character of Satan. The artistic problem of the realistic novel, of the accurate delineation of the author's circumstances, is simply this: have the circumstances so moved the author's mind and soul that out of them he can create a great work of art, whose greatness will survive those or any other circumstances, and can be accepted 100 or 500 years after by those ignorant of its origin? Mr. Tippett's word "our" challenges posterity.

The printed copy does not print the libretto separately, but a small edition with words is issued by Schott's (no price given). In form this oratorio is a loose string of pieces for orchestra, chorus, and various soloists (including an alto singing the argument and a bass as narrator, a Mother, an Uncle, an Aunt, and the Boy) in narrative sequence, some continuing and some not.

Sharply breaking into the narrative are the five static moments when five negro spirituals, set for the assembled musicians, are introduced. The libretto is by the composer, and has been praised as a poem in itself, after the manner of T. S. Eliot. I myself cannot find it of striking or memorable interest. On the other hand, it might be argued (and has been) that there is the advantage of homogeneity of style in having libretto and music written by the same man. This is true neither in logic nor in practice: if it were, it would prove that *Siegfried* must inevitably be a greater work of art than *Figaro*, for example. But Mr. Tippett has vitiated any claim to such convenience and homogeneity by this curious dragging in of negro spirituals. Such naive lines of Mr. Tippett's as

"My dreams are all shattered in a ghastly reality,
The wild beating of my heart is stilled:
day by day.
Earth and sky are not for those in prison":

such lines may have a very close relation with Mr. Tippett's musical intention and style. But they clearly have not the remotest connection with the lines—

"Go down, Moses,
"Way down in Egypt land."

In fact, in the pure point of style, these negro spirituals seem to me entirely unsuitable to the work—to its subject, racially, historically, sociologically, religiously, musically, or in any other way whatsoever. The obvious intention that these tunes should take the place to which Bach allotted the Chorale in the Passions and Church Cantatas is based upon a string of false arguments, too long (and I feel too obvious) to recount here. In one sense, the composer uses these moments of familiarity and contact with his audience as cathartic elements in the tragedy: as such they are failures, in my view, because they are entirely out of style with the rest of the music. At any rate, the composer seems to think that their added sixths and pentatonic melodies and enharmonic modulations give us sufficient of sun and sweetness, for the rest of his music is written in an idiom of grinding discord and uncompromising gloom. It reminds one of the refugees' accounts of Nazi atrocities that one used to read in the *New Statesman*: the idiom is distinctive enough and the writing normally skilful, but this is not the prose of a master, rather it is the clever despatch-writing of a war-correspondent. From the musical point of view I rather dislike labels, like "A Spiritual of Anger", "Chorus of the Self-Righteous"—they suggest carving the words "Valour", "Patriotism", round the high plinth of a memorial statue. No single movement is developed to any great length, however closely it begins: indeed, the whole picture is fragmentary in its make-up. The vocal counterpoint is extremely difficult to sing: much of it would never "come off" with decent effect, and so is academic rather than practical. (The same may be said of that very odd canon on p. 67.) Despite all this some deeply felt music has been poured into this framework: the general ensemble at the end (No. 29) offers a rather abrupt but quite impressive climax to a formal scheme which has seemed somewhat vague up to that moment. There are some good moments, and there are some manifest failures.

I do not attempt to assess the work in its full artistic stature. For one thing, I cannot fight under Mr. Tippett's flaming sword: for the second, I want to see the music fifty years hence after all the glamour has gone (though no doubt man will still oppress man *somewhere* on earth even as far ahead as that!). Of this I am sure: *A Child of our Time* is no epic, and as a piece to perform to-day, it is not really worth the trouble involved in the compassing of all its unnecessary difficulties.

Gordon Jacob. *Sinfonietta* for full orchestra. Full score. (Joseph Williams.) 15s. Parts 12s. 6d. or 1s. 6d. each.

Perhaps the most engaging of all the good qualities of this delightful short work is its sense of humour: and by that I mean its sense of proportion, of fun, of joy in sound-patterns and colours for their own sake, its total lack of pompousness or impressiveness or "improvingness", its rightness to scale. If you reduce the *sinfonia* with a diminutive, you do much more than merely curtail its length. A pony is not a horse seen through a diminishing glass. Dr. Jacob has taken the *sinfonietta* and made it, perfectly, into a form of its own: and I cannot tell you much more about it, for the content is the form and the form is the content, as with a Shakespeare sonnet. Dedicated to Clarence Raybould and section C of the B.B.C. Orchestra, the *Sinfonietta* has 3 movements, lasts about 12½ minutes, and uses the usual double wood-wind and strings with 2 horns, 2 trumpets, one trombone, timpani and percussion.

It was to be expected that the scoring would be impeccable, but here is much more than just natty and delicacy. The score is a delight to read, so entertainingly does Dr. Jacob fit ideas and colours into his delicate little pattern. (What fun he has with his trumpets!) The two allegri are broken by a siciliana-like movement whose tears are not to be taken seriously. But, indeed, the whole work is not to be taken seriously, save in one way, the best—I mean as music. There may be some esoteric meaning, some spiritual message, behind these sounds. I do not think so, and hope not. All I know for

certain is that lately I have rarely come across a work whose sounds pleased me more; they are arranged in their exactly right order with such verve and delighted craftsmanship; they seek, simply, to be themselves and to be delightful. They succeed. It is a tiny masterpiece.

Handel. *Amaryllis*. Suite for orchestra arranged by Sir Thomas Beecham. Full score. (Boosey and Hawkes.) \$4.00.

One would have liked to hope that the day has past when musicians were expected to be impressed by a superscription like "Handel-Beecham", except for concert purposes. A full score ought surely to contain some reference, if only out of respect for the original composer if not just for the reader, to the source of the music arranged, its date and circumstances, its original notes and orchestration. The full score before me gives an excellent "blurb" of Beecham's *Faithful Shepherd*, but of *Amaryllis* tells me nothing. The name does not occur under the list of Handel's operas in my *Grove* (not the latest edition, I confess, for my copy of that was stolen by the National Fire Service earlier in the war), so I must take things on trust. A charming suite, as indeed one would expect of Handel—and how many more could one not make up if one tried? The scoring (which asks for strings, double wood-wind and 2 horns, with 2 trumpets, drums and triangle in the last movement) is pleasant enough but not very distinctive, it seems from a reading. Such effective scoring, indeed, as any good musician with orchestral experience and a light touch could compass. But it will all sound very well, and no doubt we shall all soon forget which tune comes from which suite, and be making up our own suites in our heads!

H. J. F.

Gramophone Records

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CHORAL

Holst: *Hymn of Jesus*.

(Recorded under the auspices of the British Council.)

Huddersfield Choral Society and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sargent.

His Master's Voice C 3399-3400: CS 3401. 10s.

VOCAL

Bizet: *Flower Song* ("Carmen"), and

Gounod: *All Hail, Thou Dwelling* ("Faust").

Heddle Nash and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sargent.

His Master's Voice C 3405. 4s.

Handel: *O Didst Thou know*, and

As when the Dove ("Acis and Galatea").

Isobel Baillie and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sargent.

Columbia DX 1158. 4s.

Massenet: *Élégie*, and

de Fontenailles: *Obstination*.

Maggie Teyte and Gerald Moore.

His Master's Voice DA 1847. 4s.

Saint-Saëns: *Fair Spring is returning* ("Samson and Delilah"), and

Verdi: *O Fatal Beauty* ("Don Carlos").

Gladys Ripley and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sargent.

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INSTRUMENTAL

Beethoven : Sonata No. 26 in E flat major, Op. 81a.

Arthur Rubinstein.

His Master's Voice DB 6132-33. 12s.

Brahms : Rhapsody in G minor, Op. 79, No. 2, and

Intermezzo in B flat minor, Op. 117, No. 2.

Solomon.

His Master's Voice C 3406. 4s.

Debussy : Nocturne.

Cyril Smith.

Columbia DX 1159. 4s.

Delius : Violin Concerto.

Albert Sammons and Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sargent.

Columbia DX 1160-62. 12s.

ORCHESTRAL

Enesco : Roumanian Rhapsody No. 1 in A major, Op. 11.

Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, c. Ormandy.

His Master's Voice DB 6130. 6s.

Schubert : Overture in the Italian Style.

Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, c. Sargent.

Columbia DX 1157. 4s.

Sousa : Stars and Stripes for Ever, and

Washington Post.

Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra, c. Ormandy.

His Master's Voice DA 1845. 4s.

Walton : Sheep may safely graze ("Wise Virgins").

Sadler's Wells Orchestra, c. Walton.

His Master's Voice B 9380. 3s.

Beethoven. Sonata No. 26 in E flat, Op. 81a.

I never expected to hear Rubinstein in Beethoven! This performance is, in fact, an unexpected pleasure: for although there are one or two odd surprises the general effect is that of a thoughtful and sensitive presentation—of a more virile character than this Sonata usually conveys. There is great flexibility of *tempo* and a magnificent display of virtuosity in the finale. The recording is clean and well balanced apart from a lack of bass.

*Brahms. Rhapsody in G minor, Op. 79, No. 2.**

*Intermezzo in B flat minor, Op. 117, No. 2.**

Solomon gets to grips with the G minor *Rhapsody* and displays it for the forthright, trenchant piece it is. The work presents similar difficulties to the A flat *Impromptu* of Schubert's opus 90—not, of course, in the technical sense, but as regards the full and satisfying integration of its emotional content. The salient factor of each is continuity of expression; if the player's concentration fails for an instant the effect is lost. Solomon does not fail, and we are given a G minor which is a more determined and purposeful counterpart of Mozart's use of the same key. The *Intermezzo* is equally well displayed on the reverse of this outstandingly fine record.

* Strongly recommended.

*Delius. Violin Concerto.**

A superb performance by Albert Sammons: quite the finest rendering of the solo part I have ever heard. Unfortunately the recording is only mediocre, being rough on climaxes and lacking in top response towards the disc centres. The orchestral playing too is heavy and unresponsive to the soloist's many flights of imagination, though there are no obvious blemishes. However, the solo violin is the kernel of the piece and will never be handled with a more finely sympathetic understanding than here.

*Holst. Hymn of Jesus.**

This, the sixth venture to be sponsored by the British Council, is in one respect the most valuable of the series to date, in that concert performances of this very individual music will almost certainly remain few and far between; not on account of any defect of imagination, much less of craftsmanship, on the part of the composer, but simply because Holst, in his *Hymn of Jesus*, has left us an ultra-imaginative conception extremely difficult to rehearse and therefore to bring off in the concert hall. Artistically this record is not wholly successful: the voices are first-class in the true Huddersfield tradition, but the brass intonation is not always above suspicion and the orchestra maintains a level mediocrity which is usually accepted as "respectable" these days, without ever matching the inspiration of the choir. The recording, as such, is good and the set forms a very valuable historical document.

Enesco. Roumanian Rhapsody.

This disc has been available in the United States for some years. Ormandy's performance is very good indeed, but the recording is rough and lacks depth.

* * * * *

Maggie Teyte adds a fine record to her recent series of French songs, and special mention must be made of James Whitehead's perfect performance in the Massenet (whether it adds anything to the effect of the song, or not). Hedde Nash gives his colleagues a timely lesson in *bel canto*, and Gladys Ripley is at her best in the Saint-Saëns.

G. N. S.

Schubert. Overture in the Italian Style.

This work is fun. If, however, the fun was poked in the direction it sounds to be—Rossini gets the last laugh. Still, we have here one of Schubert's gayest unbuttoned moments and the playing, like the recording, is very good indeed.

*Handel. Air from Acis and Galatea.**

Miss Baillie's records of oratorio arias are fast becoming an institution. This lovely and difficult aria can never have been sung better. Like all its fellows, this record should be bought by everyone who cares for the art of song.

Delibes-Dohnanyi. Naila Waltz.

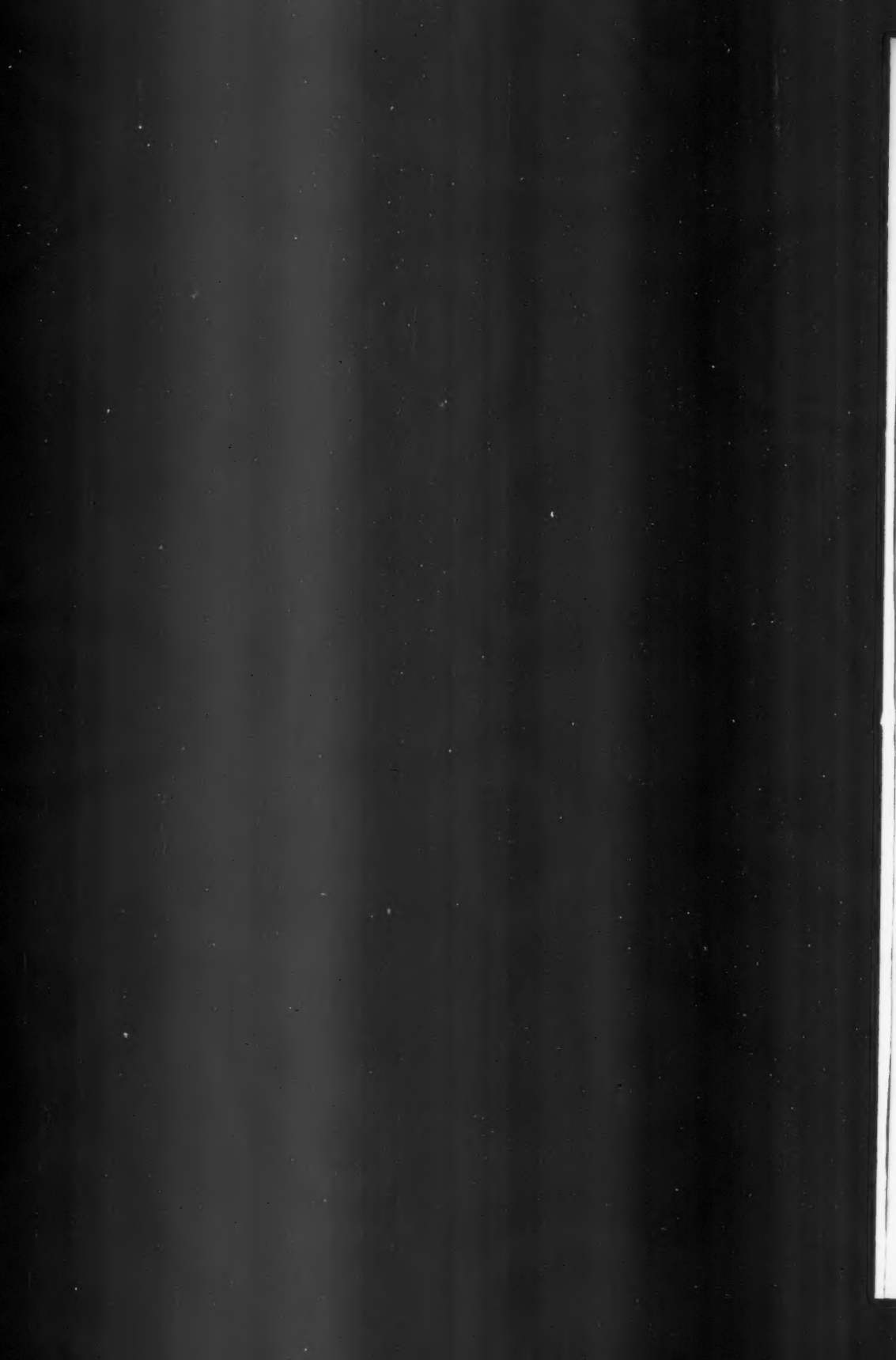
Backhaus and Kentner have each done this before—the former in a mercifully cut version. Cyril Smith plays it with everything it needs, *i.e.* some dexterity. But why—in the belated first stages of his recording career—should this brilliant and sensitive artist have to play it at all?

Sousa. Stars and Stripes Forever and Washington Post.

The Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra can have been asked to make this record for one reason and one reason only, *viz.*: Someone in a High Place thought that the kind of people who bought records made by great orchestras and with expensive labels were not able to include in their collections anything in the spirit of patriotism of an ally at war. They will hear some good piccolo playing on the first-named side.

J. B.

* Strongly recommended.



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